















# JOSHUA R. GIDDINGS.

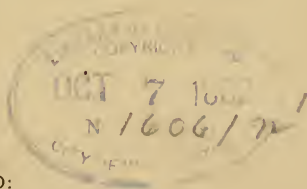
A SKETCH.

BY

WALTER BUELL.

"I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept  
the faith."

CLEVELAND:  
WILLIAM W. WILLIAMS.  
1882.



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GIDDINGS, far rougher names than thine have grown  
Smoother than honey on the lips of men;  
And thou shalt aye be honorably known,  
As one who bravely used the tongue and pen  
As best befits a freeman;—even for those  
To whom our laws' unblushing front denies  
A right to plead against the life-long woes  
Which are the negroes' glimpse of freedom's skies.  
Fear nothing and hope all things, as the right  
Alone may do securely; every hour  
The thrones of ignorance and ancient Night  
Lose somewhat of their long usurped power;  
And freedom's lightest word can make them shiver  
With a base dread that clings to them forever.

—*William Cullen Bryant.*





## JOSHUA R. GIDDINGS.

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### I.

Read any page of the history of the final struggle in and out of Congress which culminated in the war of the Rebellion, and resulted in the abolition of slavery in the United States, and you will encounter the name of Joshua R. Giddings. The history of that contest is given elsewhere in this volume and must convey, to one who reads it, a sufficient understanding of the relation of parties and the bearings of the all important question in 1838, when Mr. Giddings entered the House of Representatives. The present generation is intolerant of any theory of affairs which supposes a providential agency; like the French of the great revolution, it has taken down the Holy Image from the temple, and in the empty niche placed

the brazen figure of Chance. Were it not so, had we half the practical and literal faith of a hundred years ago, it would be difficult to doubt that Giddings was chosen before his birth for the great work to which he devoted the best years of his life; that his clearness of brain and of moral vision was given him that he might see the right, and seeing it, unflinchingly uphold it in the face of the bitter opposition, the deadly personal hatred, the venomous slanders and malice of his opponents. When he was born, the old struggle against the slave trade was not yet passed. Throughout his youth the engrossing demands of war and the inactivity which followed a victory gained by the friends of the negro, in the interdiction of the slave trade, kept the subject in abeyance. In the prime of his early manhood, while he was receiving the discipline of legal practice and serving an apprenticeship in the councils of his own State, there entered the House of Representatives a venerable and noble man, who took up the burthen which the old champions of liberty had left by the wayside, and, almost single-handed, carried the war into the country of a united and powerful enemy. That man was John Quincy Adams—scholar, diplomat, and, in the best sense of the word, statesman. He stood not entirely unsupported in his advocacy, but so far in advance of the few of his inclining as to be

quite alone—the single target of all the blows of a most malignant foe. Thus he remained until 1838, when Joshua R. Giddings entered Congress. Giddings accepted his election and took his seat, intending for one session at least, to learn and vote—not to talk. On an early day following the organization of the House, the proposal of the infamous Atherton gag rule, the object of which was to deny the right of anti-slavery petition and discussion, was, by the united vote of Southern slavocrats and Northern doughfaces, forced upon the House. This outrage set the young man to thinking; other high-handed measures in the House, and the sight of some of the lesser abuses of the slave system without, made him think the more, until he saw his duty clearly, cast his lot—and with him such an act was irrevocable—with the little band of anti-slavery men, and Adams, already seventy-three years old and feeling the infirmity of body which never touched his mind, found standing beside him, with brawny shoulder to his own, an unknown champion.

For a year or two Giddings was a learner, yet he drew from the gray head of his master many a blow, and when, nine years after his entry upon the arena, Adams fell in his place, the mantle, the inspiration, and the guardianship of the cause which he had held so dear, fell to the younger but not less earnest man. Congress was then divided

among slaveholders, their Northern sympathizers, the doughfaces who had no principles or, having them, feared to acknowledge them, and the little band of anti-slavery advocates—a forlorn hope indeed—which, when Adams fell, would certainly, for the time, have ceased to be an appreciable element in the problem, had not Giddings stood ready to lead it. No man in Congress save he, had at once ability, courage, and honesty in the measure demanded for the task. Of all these qualities he possessed enough and to spare. He carried the contest on until the tide was turned, the once despised cause had become popular, until the question was ripe for the stern arbitrament by which it was finally decided. If his birth, education, election, choice of place and splendid service were but a series of chances, then indeed was the goddess kind to the American people.

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Joshua R. Giddings was remotely of English stock, an ancestor having emigrated from England in 1635, and settled at Gloucester, Massachusetts. His great-grandfather removed from Massachusetts to Lynn, Connecticut, in 1725, and there Joshua Giddings, father of the future Congressman, was born. Later the family lived at Howland, Connecticut, and in 1773, Joshua Gid-

dings, having married, followed the westward tide of emigration, settling in Bradford county, Pennsylvania, at the little town of Tioga Point, where Joshua R. Giddings was born on the 6th day of October, 1795. Pennsylvania can not be said to have made any considerable direct contribution to the spirit and taste of the boy, for he was but six weeks of age when his father, who was endued with the characteristic spirit of an American pioneer, again broke up his home and moved to the village of Canandaigua, New York, then standing very near the western limits of civilization, and holding, as it did for many years after, an unquestioned place as the social and intellectual capital of western New York.

At Canandaigua the family remained until the spring of 1806, when, having made an exchange of his farm at that place for a large tract of wild land in what is now Wayne township, Ashtabula county, the family, save the father and the eldest son, who had preceded, set out, with farm stock and household goods, upon the weary journey into the heart of the Ohio wilderness. Hon. A. G. Riddle has written graphically of that journey, as follows:

“The 16th of June, 1806, was noted for a total eclipse of the sun. Darkness came down on an emigrant train of four oxen slowly moving a wagon in which were a middle-aged woman, a fresh

young girl, a bride, whose young husband drove the cattle and guided the movement, aided by a youth and attended by a lad of ten. Just across the Ohio and Pennsylvania line were they when darkness came down and they were obliged to camp in the woods. They journeyed all the way from Canandaigua, for weeks, on the road; from Buffalo much of the way on the lake beach, beaten hard by the waves; one night they camped in the forest, caused by the breaking of the wagon. They were kept awake by the howling of the near wolves, the most melancholy and plaintive sound of all the wilds. At nightfall of the 21st they crossed a stream called by the natives Pymatuning; on the bank they found a deserted wigwam, where they passed the night not far from the famous Omica's town. The next day they made their way across the woods to where the center of Wayne now is, in Ashtabula county, where they found a new rude cabin, without hearth, chimney, or window, surrounded by a small clearing, prepared by the father and eldest son, who had preceded them."

The life of the Giddings family during those first years in Ohio has been described a thousand times; for only in detail does it differ from that of any other of the hundreds who emigrated at nearly the same time. The greater part was made up of hard, constant, wearing toil against all the odds of nature, which had been for ages entrench-



ing itself upon the virgin soil. Neighbors were few and distant. Time, too, was precious; when leisure came arms were tired and eyes heavy; the woods were trackless in the gloom or deep with snow. So there was little society save that of the home circle, and the independence or self-dependence, which the father had learned in Pennsylvania and New York, came practically and naturally to the sons. This independence was not merely a matter of spirit; it extended to all the practicalities of life. Food they won from the ever-enlarging clearing, from the forest, with gun or line; their corn and wheat they at first ground in a mortar hollowed in the top of a stump, by means of a stone pestle attached to a pole above it; later, when a mill was built in the "neighborhood"—and neighborhood meant anywhere within fifty miles—the grist was carried thither on horseback. Clothing was the product of their own soil and flocks; was carded, hatched, spun, and woven by the women of the house; and thus there was a necessary self-sufficiency in the life that taught self-denial as well as self-reliance. The story does not need re-telling in these pages. Call on any one of the fast diminishing number of pioneers; tell him your curiosity to know how he and his fared seventy years ago. With a ready hospitality that went out of date with home-used spinning wheels, and cards, he will bid you stay,

will draw you near the fire and tell you the very story that would be written here were the fortunes of young Giddings to be followed day by day from that June morning when he first reached his father's new home until he came to maturity.

The uncleared farm in Wayne lay at the very center of the Western Reserve, — which, years after, stump speakers and writers of political editorials among the southern Democrats and the “dough-faces,” were wont to sneer at as a State separate and distinct from Ohio. It lay not at the geographical center but at the moral center. About it there grew up on all sides a community so firm and fearless; so impatient of wrong and injustice; so hard-headed, practical and sensible; so liberal and enlightened, that from it spread the influence which the Western Reserve so early began to exert over the opinions and in the counsels of State and Nation, and which has known no change or diminution since that day.

We are tempted to give the Western Reserve credit for having made such men as Giddings, Wade, and Garfield. It is not so. Giddings, Wade, and Garfield, their fathers, brothers, and friends, those hundreds who thought as rightly and spoke as strongly in the counsels of towns and villages and in the circle of the home, as did these others in the broader arena of American affairs, made the Reserve, as surely as the Puritans made

Massachusetts, the Cavaliers Virginia, or the Dutch New Amsterdam. Yet back of all this there is an indebtedness of the individual to the spirit of the place. The Giddings family came to Ohio, people of broad and cosmopolitan taste and view, as compared with most of their neighbors. They had as a family come in contact, before their removal to Ohio, with many communities in four States—Massachusetts and Connecticut, where they laid the best of all foundations of character and opinion, in a genuine New England atmosphere; Pennsylvania, rude and ready, and if prejudiced, prejudiced in a channel quite different from that of the Puritans; and then New York, where modified Massachusetts and mollified Connecticut had merged into a society far in advance of any west of the old towns on the Mohawk and Hudson. Coming thus to Ohio after so diverse a life, the Giddings family had learned more than half the lesson which their neighbors, coming directly from the old Connecticut soil, were to study for a lifetime. There is surely something in western air and life which seems to melt the intellectual and moral starch of the New Englander and, after a generation, produces from the fully acclimated stock a something which, while it has not the reckless, swaggering freedom of Kentucky or Texas, is as far from the grim and somewhat repellant stiffness of Connect-

icut; and, like most social resultants, is superior to either of the elements which produced it.

There is no doubt that much of Giddings' influence and success as a representative of his district arose from his thorough sympathy with and appreciation of the opinions and spirit of his constituents. Every day of his boyish life, on the farm and in the woods of Ashtabula county, contributed to this result. He may almost be said to have been present at the birth of the Western Reserve, and he grew up in the midst of the formation and development of the distinctive social and political faith which, in its maturity, made the opinions and the votes of his neighbors and friends so far transcend in influence their mere numerical value. He never had need of feeling the pulse of his constituents, for it beat in his own body; he never erred in forecasting their views upon any political question, for, giving due latitude for minor differences, it was always his own.

Riddle has given us an *a posteriori* picture of Giddings as a boy, evolved from his familiarity with him in later life—"a tall, raw, shapeless boy, with pleasant face, frolicsome gray eyes and an abundance of light curly hair that grew dark, fairish until the sun tanned him." He had everything to learn save the alphabet, when he came to Ohio: the subduing of the forest which stood between the farmer and his future crops, the care of the

cattle, and the never ceasing round of farm duties called for every hand, and no small share of the lighter labor fell to his lot. There was little opportunity for systematic education for any one; less for the busy son of a poor man, but the boy had that in him of more worth than tutors, scholarships, or wealth—an insatiable appetite for knowledge, which grew in the face of difficulties, fed and thrived upon the smallest food, and found new keenness in the very discouragement of the quest. We are told that the entire time passed by him at school was not beyond a few weeks. With the small capital which his knowledge of the alphabet gave him he worked out his own intellectual salvation. Books were very few in the country about; of such as there were he became possessed as owner or borrower. If he heard of some new treasure, no miles of walking through woods and across fords, wet or dry, winter or summer, could deter him from its pursuit. He was omniverous; nothing was too dry, too profound, too stupid for him. Not only did he read everything that came in his way but, with the mental digestion of an ostrich, he mastered and assimilated the very broken glass and old iron of philosophy, theology and science. With such a heterogeneous collection of matter he acquired a most catholic taste. Travels, biography, poetry, fiction—he read them all, was thankful, but, like the young raven of the

wilderness, ever opened his mouth for more. In some way he became possessed of an old copy of Lindley Murray's grammar—surely not an enticing book; this he studied and mastered, making himself thoroughly conversant with the how, and so far as any person not inspired can know, the why of the English tongue.

All this time he was laboring in the fields or roaming the woods with gun and rod, not as an idler, but as a purveyor for his family; he was growing to be a young giant in frame and in strength as well. In all matters of manly skill he was *facile princeps* among his fellows—the quickest shot, the most expert angler, an invincible wrestler, a swift and tireless runner. While he was lamenting that he had not more books, their very lack was giving him time to lay up in reserve the physical power which was to be so sorely taxed during more than twenty years of constant struggle. Rev. Harvey Coe gave him primary instruction in mathematics and he carried himself well forward in the science, studying by the firelight or the flickering of a torch at home, or, at spring time, by the light of the blazing logs in the sugar camp, possessing none of the conveniences and luxuries of study—only the text book, the will, and the appetite. This process of self-education had not advanced thus far, when there came to the little home in the woods first an indefinite whisper,



then certain news of war. The Indians, who had lived quietly and amicably about them, silently disappeared to join the enemy, leaving behind deserted wigwams and an imminent fear. There was news that the enemy was on the Maumee, plundering, burning, murdering, and moving eastward. Then came the disasters of the summer of 1812; Detroit and all Michigan were lost and there was a call for volunteers. Giddings, though but sixteen years of age, responded, joined Colonel Hayes' regiment and marched to the Huron, thence to the stockade later famous under the name of Fort Stephenson. While at this fort a small scouting party was sent out upon the peninsula with orders to bring to camp a quantity of provisions which had been left at Sandusky during Hull's occupancy of Detroit. During this scout a considerable body of Indians was discovered in possession of the farm of one Ramsdell, at Two Harbors on the shore of the lake. The force of the Indians was estimated by the whites at not far from fifty, but information received from the French, at the mouth of the Maumee, during the ensuing spring, placed the number at no less than one hundred and fifty. This discovery was the first intimation of the presence of an enemy in the vicinity and the little scouting party, retiring unobserved, hastened to the stockade and reported the facts. The garrison, originally but one hundred and fifty in num-

ber, had been so reduced by sickness that every man was obliged to stand guard one-third of the time. The necessity of still further weakening this slender force was a sad one, but the officer in charge, recognizing the importance of attacking the enemy before he could be reinforced, made a call for volunteers for the dangerous service. Young Giddings was just coming in from guard duty, when he encountered the drummer beating up volunteers, and joined the party. But thirty minutes was given for supper and preparation; then the little party of seventy-two men, commanded by Captain Cotton, set out in boats and landed soon after sunrise at Middle Orchard, near where the enemy had been seen.

Leaving a guard of eight men with the boats, the remainder of the party pushed forward to attack. During their absence, the Indians, who had deserted their position, approaching in canoes, stumbled upon the guard which had been left with the boats and, though the men escaped in safety to a neighboring island, it was at the expense of the two larger and more important boats. It is probable that this encounter was the first intimation which reached the enemy that they were liable to attack.

Finding the expected battle ground deserted Cotton set his face toward the boats, taking the fortunate precaution of throwing out a flanking party. When still some distance from his destina-

tion he was suddenly attacked by the savages who rose from the deep grass before him. The men dispersed behind shelter and the fight was kept up sharply for some time after the arrival of the flankers, when it ceased as if by mutual consent, neither party having obtained any definite advantage, though the Indians lost more heavily than the whites, of whom but three were killed. Continuing his march toward the boats, Cotton was again attacked when near the place of landing, and, finding his boats destroyed, was obliged to take shelter in an old log house, from which the Indians were unable to dislodge him. About thirty of the whites passed, unobserved, to the shore, were taken off by the boat guard which came over from the island where it had taken refuge, and thus almost miraculously escaped massacre. A party was sent on to the fort, assistance obtained, and Cotton and his men rescued from their perilous position. The Indians then deserted the peninsula. These two skirmishes were the first engagements fought in Ohio during the War of 1812, and were overlooked by all historians of the war until, in 1843, Mr. Giddings himself contributed an account from which the above particulars are gleaned, to Squire's History of the Fire Lands.

Five months after enlistment Mr. Giddings was mustered out of the service with his regiment and returned to his home life. Several times there-

after, during the war, the Reserve was menaced, but it never was attacked, and the young man was not called upon to take further part. His assistance in fact was sorely needed at home, for his father had invested his all in the lands upon which he had settled and spent so much labor, and, the title failing, he was thrown upon the world in poverty, a misfortune from which he never recovered.

Though, as this sketch has sufficiently shown, young Giddings' education was very desultory, it was broad and exact enough to earn him the exceptional place among his neighbors which, in those simple pioneer communities, was readily awarded to one whose knowledge extended beyond the "three r's." He was consulted in matters of law and business, at the age of nineteen, was requested to teach a school in the neighborhood and accepted the post. Like many other men and women striving for self-enlightenment, he gained doubly in his efforts to instruct others, systematizing his knowledge, so that it was always afterward available, grasping principles where he had before recognized only the facts which were their outward manifestation, and, while he showed his scholars how to creep, himself making great strides toward the broad and liberal plane which he sought.

For four years he lived thus—a farmer, more a teacher, most of all a student. He never for a

moment vegetated, but constantly grew. His was not a receptive but an aggressive mind; he was no doubt ambitious, for no man ever did such work as his to whom ambition was not a birth-right, yet he was no dreamer of dreams or builder of castles. With him to know good was to covet it, and to covet it meant, by the means nearest his hand, to strive for its possession.

At the age of twenty-three he made choice of his life work and entered the law office of Elisha Whittlesey, of Canfield, Ohio, as a student. Whittlesey was himself a man of no common parts and, judging from results, must have possessed to a marked degree that rare tact which makes the successful teacher, for many of the lawyers whose brilliant powers contributed to make the bar of Ashtabula county one of the most notable in the State, came from his office, and bear, in their methods and ideas, the marks of his training. There is no memorial of Giddings' student life in that office, save that spread by his subsequent achievements upon the records of the court. This would tell us, if the character and habits of the man did not do so, that his work was constant and systematic, that his enthusiasm never flagged, that he read widely and deeply, and, at the end of his two years' clerkship, stood at the threshold of his noble profession, well prepared to enter and to honor it.

## II.

The professional reputation of Mr. Giddings rests upon the labor of the seventeen years from 1821, when he was admitted to the bar and began practice at Jefferson, the county seat of Ashtabula county, until 1838, when he entered Congress, and, to all intents and purposes, abandoned his profession forever. No lawyer could have made better arguments before a court in banc, than did he in Congress, when discussing the legal and constitutional bearings of the slavery question; nor more moving appeals at *nisi prius*, than were his in behalf of the same cause from stump and rostrum; but these efforts, impossible for any but a learned advocate to make, still contribute to his repute as a statesman, not as a lawyer.

A country practice is to-day the best training school for the general lawyer; in those years this was more emphatically true than now. Then lawyers mounted their horses and rode the circuit with the judge, working side by side, and under mutual criticism day after day and week after week. Every cause was tried in the presence of a



large proportion of the bar,—friends, rivals, and enemies,—and this professional audience was attentive as well as critical. Men more often came late into causes, accepting a retainer perhaps when the case was actually called, and relying upon general knowledge, wit, and the inspiration of an auditory for success. There was less of technicality, perhaps less of scholarship, than now ; certainly there was more dependence upon eloquence and personal magnetism than upon cold argument. People having no direct interest in a cause flocked to the court room as they now go to the theater, for amusement, attracted by the prospect of a pleasurable intellectual excitement, rare enough in their lives. They crowded the court room while the cause was tried, and gossiped concerning it about the tavern and village store at night. The man who was in those days a leader at the bar was indeed a leader among men. With however much of justice the people judged the quarrels among their fellows, they estimated lawyers by one stern rule—that of success. They cared more for results than for methods ; they delighted to see elaborate preparation set at naught by ready wit, and learning defeated by expedient.

These little knots of fireside gossips were the makers or spoilers of a lawyer's name, and for their approval there was an emulation as keen as ever rose between knights tilting for a lady's favor.

Specializing was then almost or quite unknown. Of course natural bent had its effect, but the leading lawyer of the bar might be seen, like an actor of the same time, in drama, tragedy, farce, burlesque, and pantomime,—defending a murderer, defining a boundary line, prosecuting a slander suit, trying a horse case—all in turn. Such a practice made lawyers—many sided, versatile, ready lawyers—and gave a preparation for political and legislative service beyond any that now exists.

It was into such association as this that Giddings was thrown at the outset of his professional career. This was more than sixty years ago; the generation of lawyers which saw the beginning of his professional career, has passed away; the gray-headed fathers at the bar of to-day were but neophytes when he ceased to practice and there is little save tradition to guide us in picturing him personally. Some of these traditions have been so well crystallized by Mr. Riddle, in his sketch already quoted, that his words may again be borrowed with profit:

“With the first collection of the Ohio statutes, known as “the sheepskin code,” and such other books as he could command, such clients and cases as came, the young lawyer procured a horse and portmanteau, joined his few professional brethren and started with the presiding judge on the common pleas circuit, through mud and forest, legal

lance in rest, stopping at log cabins and settling grave cases in log temples of justice. Those were the days of free manners, free lives, and practical jokes; though the Grand River presbytery expressed their disapproval of gathering sap on Sunday. The commanding figure, six feet two in moccasins, massive head, laughing gray eyes, and frank manner of the young lawyer, with a reputation for great physical strength, agility, and courage, made him a favorite with the primitive people who flocked from all parts of the country, and crowded the court rooms to hear and see the lawyers and to treasure up and repeat their sayings, and tell absurd stories of them to their less fortunate neighbors at home. Those were not the days of long trials nor of great speeches. Court began at eight in the morning and sat until ten at night. The young lawyer soon became noted for the thoroughness with which he studied his case itself, the tact with which he brought out his evidence, and shrewdness in dealing with witnesses on the other side. Bland and wary, an inflexible will, a passionate earnestness lay seemingly passive under a suavity of manner not easily disturbed. With his industry, application, and power of physical and mental endurance, he grew rapidly—for good lawyers grow rather than are made—to be an accomplished lawyer of his day and his name was mentioned at points outside of his circuit with

admiration and respect. His strength was in the care and thoroughness of his preparation, his tact and skill in conducting the trial of his case so that the final argument was really a summing up—a condensed statement of points already brought out in a forcible and happy arrangement. His knowledge of the law, in the range of the cases of his time, was thorough, his method of presentation to the court clear and logical. He had some difficulties to overcome in his addresses to juries, but became a persuasive, ingenious advocate, knowing exactly the quality and calibre of his men and the reasons and motives that would control them.”

The quotation is sufficient to give an idea of what Mr. Giddings was, in manner and method, at that day. He was fortunate in early securing retainers in cases which excited general public interest and in winning unexpected success in nearly all. This made him talked of, and to be talked of is half the country lawyer's battle. Thus in the celebrated malpractice case of Williams vs. Hawley. Dr. Hawley was a physician and surgeon of much prominence and wealth, surrounded by influential friends. Mrs. Williams, the plaintiff, was the wife of a poor man. By an accident she fractured one of her legs, but in such a manner that the limb might easily have been set and made as useful as ever. Dr. Hawley, with unaccountable stupidity, brutality, or ignorance, removed a portion

of the bone and made the unfortunate woman a hopeless cripple. Mr. Giddings was retained by the injured woman and her husband, and instituted a suit for damages against Hawley. The professional reputation of the defendant was at stake; to him defeat meant irreparable ruin. His money, position, personal influence—everything that he could command that might give a feather's weight of assistance in the cause, was brought to bear in one of the most determined and stubborn defenses ever known in Ashtabula county. The physicians of the vicinity, moved by a natural *esprit du corps*, were, to a man, witnesses for the defendant; the cause was tried and a considerable verdict given the plaintiff. An appeal was made to the supreme court, which then tried causes in the first instance and with a jury a new trial was had and again the plaintiff won a verdict. The defendant carried an appeal before the court in banc, made strong representations that, on account of popular feeling in the case it was impossible for him to obtain justice in Ashtabula, advanced technical grounds for a reversal, and obtained it, with an order changing the venue to Trumbull county. In this third trial the celebrated John C. Wright, of Cincinnati, was retained to assist the defense, and the evidence of the most famous physicians of New York and Philadelphia was introduced, yet the plaintiff again recovered a verdict, heavy for the time and carry-

ing with it the costs. None of this money, it is said, did Giddings claim or receive. He was at that time young in years and young at the bar, and his triumph over such an array of legal and medical talent as was opposed to him was probably of more real advantage to him, than would have been the entire amount recovered without the reputation.

Retained for the defense in the cause of Ohio vs. Barnes, the prisoner being indicted for the murder of a young girl in the Kirtland woods, Giddings broke through a seemingly fatal web of circumstantial evidence, and secured an acquittal, although public opinion, appearances, and all the fortuitous circumstances which have so great an effect in such cases were against the prisoner. Many believed then and the few now living who remember the occurrence agree with them, that the extraordinary skill and tact of Mr. Giddings saved a life that richly deserved to be forfeited. In this case the able prosecuting attorney was assisted by Sherlock J. Andrews, one of the most successful trial lawyers in the West.

Trumbull county then included what is now Mahoning, and Geauga what is now Lake county. Over the three counties of Trumbull, Geauga, and Ashtabula, Mr. Giddings' reputation and practice rapidly extended until, by the time he had been ten years at the bar, there was rarely an important

cause in any of the three, upon one or the other side of which he was not retained. He was, in fact, nearly or quite at the head of the bar ten years after he took his place at its foot. At that time there was in Ashtabula county a bright young man of whom the world has since heard much—Benjamin F. Wade. With him, in 1831, Mr. Giddings formed a law partnership, than which none could have been more fortunate for either. Mr. Wade had then but recently come to the bar, having studied in the office of Mr. Giddings' old preceptor. He was a young man of acknowledged ability, a thorough lawyer by instinct, but, so it is said, the victim of a modesty and lack of self confidence which, for more than a year after the formation of the partnership, prevented his appearance in court. He devoted his time to the preparation of cases and showed such learning and skill in this department of the business that he left Mr. Giddings free to devote himself to the work of the courts. The possibilities of the practice were greatly increased by this fact, and clients came in such numbers as to soon force Wade from his retirement behind digests and statute books and to speedily advance the practice, until it became by far the largest in the district and one of the largest in the State. The result of this increased clientage was that both partners, living in simple village style, accumulated money which called for invest-



ment. Money was then very plentiful, an era of wild land speculation was upon the country, values were artificial and confidence unbounded. Both Giddings and Wade made large land purchases, principally in Toledo, and entered with great zest into town lot speculations. Taking his possessions at their estimated value Mr. Giddings considered himself rich enough to warrant his retirement from practice, and in 1836 dissolved his partnership with Mr. Wade, his place in the firm being taken by Rufus P. Ranney, who had been a student in the office and was newly admitted to practice.

Scarcely was this change made when came the panic which invariably follows such artificial inflation of values as had characterized the land market for some time, the bubble burst, the price of land fell much below its real value, land could not be sold, purchasers were bankrupt and could not pay. Mr. Giddings owed certain sums upon his purchases and found himself seriously embarrassed. Making the best settlement possible he returned to his profession to repair damages and in 1837 formed a partnership with Mr. Flavel Sutcliffe, a brilliant young man whose prospects were blighted two years later by insanity. With such reputation as Mr. Giddings held at the bar and after so short an absence, it is no difficult matter to acquire a practice and so it proved



in this case. The new firm had scarcely established itself before it was overrun with business and Mr. Giddings was again in his old place before the people.

This prosperous course was not destined to continue without interruption. Elisha Whittlesey, of Canfield, was elected to the Eighteenth Congress, in December, 1823. Having served continuously until 1838, he was appointed fourth auditor of the treasury and resigned his seat in the Twenty-fifth Congress in the midst of his term, to accept the post. To the place thus vacated Giddings was nominated by the district Whig convention over the Hon. Seabury Ford, and was elected for the remainder of the Twenty-fifth and later for the Twenty-sixth Congress, serving thereafter, continuously, save for a few weeks, until the end of the Thirty-fifth Congress.

Mr. Giddings did not go to Congress entirely without legislative experience. He had been in 1826 elected a member of the Ohio House of Representatives, had served a single term, declined a re-election, made a run for the State Senatorship and, in the latter attempt, had sustained the only defeat he ever met at the polls. The Ohio Legislature was not at the time pressed with important business nor were its chambers often the scene of exciting incidents. The State was young, the Legislative duties were largely routine and the only

significance attending Mr. Giddings' service in the house was the familiarity with parliamentary usage which it gave him—a matter of no small importance for the reason that he was scarcely in his seat at Washington before he began to take active part in legislation.

### III.

A right understanding of the subjects and discussions collaterally involved in this sketch, calls for at least a primary knowledge of the history of African slavery as related to North America. So complex is the subject, so voluminous is its literature, and so numerous are the recorded efforts of individuals and associations for its repression and abolition that to exhaustively treat it would require the labor of half a lifetime and the filling of volumes with the saddest and most pitiful story in the history of Anglo-Saxon civilization.

The thoughtless reader and observer of our own time is apt to regard the agitation which resulted in the release of the negro from bondage within the limits of the United States as a comparatively recent one, and it is not uncommon to hear a certain political party charged with responsibility for the civil war, by reason of its espousal of the abolition cause. So far is this from the truth that the same discussion which made memorable the days when Joshua R. Giddings stood as the champion of right and humanity in the House of Represent-

atives, arose in England in 1562 when Elizabeth, under the protest of her conscience, sanctioned the first removal of African slaves from the then doubly dark continent, by Englishmen. The argument which the Queen then used to quiet her own scruples, that the slave trade, being carried on by Spain, Portugal, Holland, and other maritime powers, was a commercial necessity to England, grew gray with age. It was made to justify the traffic in American bottoms after the Independence, and only gave way when the outraged sense of a more enlightened century refused to recognize its conclusiveness, condemned the slave trade as a piracy and compelled the American advocates of the hideous wrong to look elsewhere for a sophism which might partially cover their awful sins. Then there came into being, full-grown and readily accepted by those whose interest it subserved, the awful, the impious lie, that slavery is a divine institution, and he that raises his voice against its continuance or his hand to strike the shackles from a single black man is defying God and should be an outcast in this world as such must be in the world to come.

From 1562 until 1863 there was never a day or night when good men and women were not praying and striving that the curse of slavery might pass from the world. Elizabeth expressed her fear that some of the negroes might be carried off

“without their free consent,” and said “it would be destestable and call down the vengeance of heaven upon the undertakers.” Morgan Godwyn and Richard Baxter as early as 1650, Dr. Primett, Dr. Atkins, the Reverend Griffith Hughes, Edmund Burke, Bishop Warburton, and Adam Smith—these are some of the men who, in England and previous to 1765, were the advocates of the African cause.

In 1765 Mr. Grenville Sharp, an English lawyer, took up the case of Jonathan Strong, an American negro, taken to England as a slave, with a view to prevent his compulsory return to America. This he accomplished, but on special grounds, and was not satisfied, as he had determined to secure from a court of last resort the broad declaration that “*as soon as a slave set foot in England he is free.*” To this end he tried a number of cases, finally, in 1772, obtaining the desired judgment in the famous cause of James Somerset, and winning the first distinct and substantial victory ever secured for the negro in England. To illustrate the utterly sodden condition of judicial sentiment upon the subject, it is only necessary to say that Mr. Sharp, in 1783, secured the arrest of the captain and mate of the slaver *Zong*, upon charge of having thrown overboard one hundred and thirty-two live negroes. The object of the men was to defraud the underwriters, and, though the offense was

clearly proven—in fact admitted—no conviction was obtained. This enormity, so exposed, though unpunished, was not without its effect. There seemed an immediate quickening of the public sense and feeling; hundreds wrote and spoke strongly against the crime of slavery, and Cowper wrote, from the fullness of his tender heart, the often quoted lines:

“ We have no slaves at home; then why abroad?  
And they themselves, once ferried o’er the wave  
That parts us, are emancipate and loos’d.  
Slaves cannot breathe in England; if their lungs  
Receive our air, that moment they are free;  
They touch our country and their shackles fall.  
That’s noble, and bespeaks a nation proud  
And jealous of the blessing; spread it then,  
And let it circulate through every vein  
Of all your empire—that, where Britain’s pow’r  
Is felt, mankind may feel her mercy, too.”

In 1783 the sentiment of the Society of Friends, which had been, since the days of George Fox, unitedly opposed to the theory of slavery, took definite form in a petition to the House of Commons, urging the passage of a bill, then pending in Parliament, for the restriction of the African slave trade, and praying also for the extension of the provisions of the act so that it might be practically prohibitory. This petition came from the yearly meeting of the Friends, and was an official declaration of the principles of the sect. It was respectfully received, read, and laid on the table “on ac-

count of the advanced progress of the session." Lord North, then prime minister, said that the object of the petition should recommend it to every humane breast, but that the slave trade was, "in a commercial view, a necessity to almost every nation in Europe."

In 1783, having presented its petition with the result stated, the Society of Friends organized, within its own membership, an association having for its aim systematic labor in behalf of African freedom. This society—the first of its kind in England, the second in the world—was an important agent in securing the results for which it was organized. Its existence was kept secret, and its members, appreciating how fatal to their object was the public indifference on the subject of slavery, set deliberately and patiently to work to create a popular opinion in harmony with their own. To this end they appointed several of their clearest thinkers and best writers to state and reiterate, through the public prints and by pamphlets, the moral, religious, and constitutional arguments against slavery; every incident of the trade and system which came to their knowledge and could be brought to account in exciting public sympathy, was published, commented upon, circulated, and repeated, until not only the reading people of England, but laboring men lounging at inn doors, and apprentices at their work-tables, knew that a great

wrong was being committed with the assent of the English people and under the protection of their flag. The value of all this quiet and apparently spontaneous agitation was not at once made evident by any definite public action, but the Friends found themselves gaining new allies, who supplemented and extended their work, and by this gradual accession there grew up a party and a public sentiment, so strong as not only to render possible, but to compel the action which tardily followed. Co-operation was established without regard to sect; correspondence was opened with sympathizers in France, America, and elsewhere; the cloak of secrecy was thrown off, and, finally, in 1788, Mr. Wilberforce opened, in the House of Commons, the parliamentary struggle, which was destined to continue for twenty years, to result in placing Great Britain in a position of permanent antagonism with slavery—to finally lead to the abolition of the slave trade. On the 9th of May, in the year named, he presented a motion pledging the House at an early day in the coming session “to take into consideration the circumstances of the slave trade complained of, . . . and what may be fit to be done thereupon.”

This long and weary struggle cannot be followed here. As always in the conflict with slavery, the pecuniary interest of the kingdom and of individuals, was arrayed against fundamental moral truths



which no man could deny and none not so blinded could oppose. The Society, through whose efforts the matter had come before Parliament, was untiring in its efforts to strengthen the hands of the friends of freedom within that body. Its agents spent years of time and great sums of money in traveling, observing and collecting facts and statistics upon which might be founded arguments in their behalf; the horrible traffic was followed to its source and to its ultimate extent, that its murderous cruelty and deep degradation might tell their own story in the councils at Westminster. Whoever else supported or opposed the cause, Wilberforce was always faithful and indefatigable; he devoted his entire time, thought, influence, and much of his money to its advancement, and, after many rebuffs, delays, and temporary defeats, none of which disheartened him for an hour, won the first seeming parliamentary advantage, when, on the 25th of April, 1792, the House of Commons agreed to a gradual emancipation of all slaves held in British colonies, to be complete in 1796. On the 8th of May, 1792, the House of Lords met to consider the resolution, abandoned the examination almost at the outset, laying it over until the next session and, in that next session, did little more. The matter having been postponed it was necessary to secure its reconsideration in the House of Commons that it might be reaffirmed.

Moving for this reconsideration Mr. Wilberforce met a rebuff, the House of Commons taking advantage of a technicality to defeat its own resolution.

This single episode is related to give some faint idea of the constant disappointment against which these brave men so long struggled to final victory. This victory came in a preliminary form by the passage on the 31st day of March, 1806, of a bill intended to prevent the employment of British capital and bottoms in the slave trade; on the 5th of January, 1807, the final and more definite resolution was passed in the House of Lords; it was sent to the Commons, amended, returned to the Lords, approved by them, passed by both Houses on the 24th of March, 1807, and, on the 25th, received the assent of the king and became a law. It provided that no vessel should clear for slaves from any port in the British dominions, after May 1, 1807, and no slaves be landed within British jurisdiction after May 1, 1808.

The men by whose tireless efforts the first grand step had been accomplished, were not disposed to accept this half success as an excuse for idleness. Their labors, in and out of Parliament, procured the advance of the slave trade from a misdemeanor, punishable by fine, to a felony, punishable by transportation or imprisonment at hard labor for fourteen years, and this penalty, as well, proving

ineffectual, the offense was through their efforts declared piracy, with the penalty of death. So it continued from 1824 until 1837, when a too merciful administration again reduced its punishment to imprisonment for life.

Still unsatisfied, the devoted advocates of human liberty continued their efforts until they were crowned with a full and final reward, in 1833, when, on the 28th day of August, slavery was absolutely and summarily abolished throughout British dominions.

The somewhat over-long discussion of the anti-slavery movement in England has not been given space without an object. It conveys the best possible means of estimating the work accomplished by the great champions of American liberty. It accounts for the bitter rancor, the personal and class hatred, the proscription of the individual, the sinking of principle in selfishness, the debasement of society, the corruption of the church, and final war in our own country. It shows how terrible was the task undertaken by Adams, Slade, and Giddings, for, if it required twenty-eight years for the British Parliament to prohibit the slave trade and forty-six years to free but little more than seven hundred thousand slaves—when the interest of the members of that body were related to slavery only as were those of the free States in America, through channels of trade and com-

merce—what wonder that the four millions of American negro bondmen should have remained in slavery so long; that a Congress, morally controlled by their masters and numerically by their enemies, should have failed of liberating them; that Adams should have died with his hopes unrealized; that Sumner should have been stricken to the ground because he dared advocate their cause; that John Brown should have been hanged; that America should have suffered the bloodiest civil war of modern times!

Slavery in North America was first introduced in 1620 by the landing of a cargo of negroes at Jamestown, Virginia, from a Dutch ship. There was probably little thought among the settlers as to the moral bearing of the act—little anticipation of the extension and growth of the institution, which they were unwittingly instrumental in establishing—only the pressure of a present necessity, the sad lack of hands to subdue for them the wilderness which lay beyond them. For forty years the colony of Virginia went on, from day to day, receiving an occasional cargo of slaves from the Dutch, utilizing them as they came, but not until 1660 were the negroes enough in number or importance, to call for any colonial enactment for the protection or definition of the system.

Mr. George W. Julian, in a valuable article published under the title of "The Genesis of Mod-

ern Abolition," in the *International Review* for June, 1882, says: "It is gratifying to know that the evils of American slavery were never without their witness. As early as the year 1688 some German Quakers in Pennsylvania lifted up their voices against the traffic in men. This was seconded by the official action of the yearly meeting of the colonies of Pennsylvania and New Jersey in 1696. The earliest action of the New England Quakers against the slave trade was in 1715. William Burling was the first anti-slavery Quaker of any note in this country, and was followed by Ralph Sandiford who wrote against slavery in 1729, and by Benjamin Lay who wrote and spoke against it in 1737. The labors of these anti-slavery apostles were followed by those of the untiring and ever faithful Anthony Benezett, and his powerful coadjutor, John Woolman, whose traveling ministry of more than twenty years bore witness to his faithfulness, and largely aided the complete emancipation of the Society of Friends from the evil of slavery, which was accomplished in the colonies in which he labored, soon after his death."

The original body of law, adopted by the colony of Massachusetts, prohibited slavery in general terms, but left a wide latitude for construction in the reservations: "Unless it be lawful captives, taken in just wars, and such strangers as willingly sell themselves or are sold unto us, and these shall

have all the liberties and Christian usages which the law of God, established in Israel, requires." The literal construction of this Mosaic exception gave sufficient warrant to the shrewd colonists for the introduction of the convenient system of African bondage, and it was early taken advantage of. Connecticut followed with a legalizing act in 1650; The Dutch of the New Netherlands introduced a mild form of negro bondage in 1650, and left it as an heritage to the colony of New York.

So, from colony to colony, north and south, as the settlement advanced, there were carried along with it the seeds of wrath from which, so long after, the nation, then unborn, was destined to reap a retribution so terrible. As the planting and growth of slavery advanced, so did the provision for its control and defense; laws were enacted regarding slave property, defining its nature, liability to seizure for debt and distribution in cases of intestacy; enactments were made, too, fixing the right of the master to his slave, the punishment of offences against slave property and, in the South, laying the foundations of that divine system to the beneficence of which two generations of Southern orators in Congress and on the stump bore so eloquent witness.

The spread of the institution and its abolition at the North cannot be followed here. Both are matters of history, and the present work has only

to do with the account of those repressive measures which paved the way for, and defined the labors of, Joshua R. Giddings.

The North never took kindly to slavery. Though it accepted the temporary advantage to be gained from the use of the slaves, there was something in the constitutional tendencies and the religious and social feeling of all who lived in New England, or moved westward from those mother colonies, essentially opposed to permanent human bondage. Pennsylvania, too, was, by reason of its large Quaker population, very impatient of the existence of slavery and took early ground against its spread. In 1705 an act was passed by the assembly of that colony deprecating the further importation of negro and Indian slaves, and, in 1712, a second act imposing a duty of twenty pounds each upon all slaves so imported. This duty was so great as to be, as was doubtless intended, essentially prohibitory. These early attempts at regulating the slave trade were annulled by royal edict. New England, New Jersey, and New York also took repressive steps at about the same time with no better result.

The first and most important effective legislative action toward the limitation and control of slavery was taken in 1787 by the last Continental Congress, which, in prescribing a system of laws for the government of the territory of the United States north-



west of the Ohio river, included a perpetual prohibition of the introduction within its bounds of slavery or involuntary servitude, save as a punishment for crime.

The committee previously appointed by Congress, for the framing of an ordinance for the government of all the territory of which the sovereignty remained in the confederation of colonies, viz: all not included within the actual limits of one of the original thirteen colonies, had introduced a similar clause drawn by Thomas Jefferson, its chairman, but as the territory included all the region adjacent to Virginia and the colonies to the southward, the slave-holding class, already jealous of any measure which might possibly abridge the spread of the institution in the South, defeated the provision, striking it out from the ordinance. The limitation of the effect of the latter article, as passed in 1787, to territory northwest of the Ohio, disarmed this antagonism and secured to the free North and West a safeguard from the encroachments of slavery, without which it is doubtful whether its advance could have been checked.

This brings us to the year 1787, when assembled at Philadelphia the convention to revise the articles of confederation of the colonies and which framed the Constitution of the United States.

At that time few people contemplated the per-



manency of slavery, fewer defended it, and none dared justify it on abstract grounds. Expediency and convenience were its best friends. Had the Southern delegates to the convention foreseen the future, slavery would have been recognized and distinctly approved; had the North possessed the same prevision it would have been condemned and irrevocably forbidden; had both appreciated the full importance of the subject, it is probable that no Constitution would have been adopted, and a union of the States would have proved impossible.

As it was, slavery gained but three concessions in the Constitution. The first was a provision that Congress should not prohibit the slave trade before 1808; the second, that persons held to service or labor in one State, under the laws thereof, and escaping into another, should not be thereby discharged from such service or labor, but should be delivered upon claim of the person to whom such labor was due; the third that, for purpose of representation in Congress, three-fifths of the slave population should be enumerated. The granting of these three concessions on the part of the Northern men was, in reality, to quote the word used at the time, in pursuance of a "bargain," in consideration of which the South, especially and directly interested in the cheap transportation of goods to Europe, consented to surrender to the

General Government the right to prescribe laws to regulate navigation, thus opening the doors to the protection of New England vessel owners, at the expense of Southern producers.

The only right of limiting the slave trade reserved to the United States previous to 1808, was conveyed in a clause which empowered it to impose a tax upon such importation of not more than two dollars per head. During the session of the first Congress of the United States, determined efforts were made to secure the imposition of this tax, all of which were defeated. The South opposed the tax on general principles. Many Northern men disapproved of it as in a measure recognizing slavery and, in effect, declaring the negro a commodity of trade. The same fate awaited a similar effort made in the second Congress. Both sessions were marked by stirring debates concerning anti-slavery petitions received from various societies throughout the United States. The first of these came from the Pennsylvania society, organized in 1787, of which Benjamin Franklin was the first president. The memorial in question was signed by him officially, his participation in the matter being one of the last acts of his busy life. Nearly all these petitions were drawn, circulated, and forwarded to the House, by Quakers, and the discussion of the subject by Southern members degenerated into a bitter abuse of that sect.

The subject of slavery was constantly before Congress in one form or another. In 1793, in pretended accordance with the constitutional provision, a law providing for the surrender of fugitives from justice passed Congress, attracting little or no attention or opposition. The first clause of the bill was substantially that now in force, providing for the surrender, upon requisition, of escaped persons charged with or indicted for the commission of crime. The second clause gave to the owner of any slave, or his agent, power to seize the slave, wherever found within the United States, to bear him before any magistrate or justice of the peace when, upon presenting to such officer proof, *oral or written, to the satisfaction of such magistrate*, that the prisoner was an escaped slave, the complainant should be entitled to convey him to such point as he chose, protected by a legal certificate. This statute lay almost unnoticed for some time, and only when it was enforced did the opponents of slavery recognize how egregiously they had been duped. That the act transcended both the letter and the spirit of the Constitution, there is no question; that it opened the door to endless injustice and cruelty, perjury, fraud, and,—according to the view of the day—theft, is amply attested by the history of its enforcement. In 1797 there was a futile effort to forbid the institution of slavery in the proposed new Territory of Mississippi; in

1803 a determined movement was made to suspend or repeal that portion of the compact relating to the Northwest Territory which inhibited slavery, so far as the same related to Indiana. The proposal was vigorously opposed and eventually defeated. In 1805 and 1806 this attempt was renewed in many forms, all that self-interest could suggest, and ingenuity and eloquence further, was done for its success, but its defeat in the latter year was final, and the safeguard so happily erected in 1787 remained thereafter untouched.

In 1807 President Jefferson, anticipating the expiration of the constitutional limitation over the power of Congress to abolish the slave trade, recommended in his annual message that that body should at once take steps to absolutely forbid it. This portion of the message was referred to a special committee of the House, and that committee reported a bill "to prohibit the importation or bringing of slaves into the United States or the Territories thereof, after the 31st day of December, 1807." Then ensued one of the most exciting debates ever known in Congress up to that time. Southern members threatened to defy the bill, abused its framers, and came out more openly than ever before, in an abstract advocacy of slavery. In spite of all these efforts the bill passed, thus freeing America from the stigma of the slave trade

at almost the same time when England wiped out the same disgrace.

The bill as passed provided heavy fines, and imprisonment for from five to ten years, for the various forms of participation in the slave trade, made the knowing purchaser of a slave imported contrary to the provisions of the act a *particeps criminis*, subject to fine, and provided for the confiscation of every vessel engaged in the trade.

Mr. George W. Julian, in the opening of the paper already quoted, says: "The anti-slavery movement of this country may properly be divided into two dispensations. The first had its beginning soon after the introduction of slavery into the colonies, and ended, with only partial results, near the close of the last century. The second began early in the second century; just as slavery was entering upon its baleful career of domination, and closed with its destruction by the power of war. . . ." That the writer suggests a just and very obvious distinction in these words, is beyond a doubt, but there seems to be less reason for assigning the latter part of the last century, as the time when closed the first dispensation, than for placing it at the year 1807. With the passage of the law interdicting the slave trade, the object, which had been paramount in the early anti-slavery effort of the United States, was attained; from that time there was a rearray of forces and a revision of

issues. As has been shown, the effort of the anti-slavery people from colonial times until 1807. had been largely for the suppression of the slave trade and the mitigation of slave conditions. The northern states held slaves—New York as recently as 1830. Ideas had not been crystallized; few men were bold enough to advocate, even if they favored, an immediate freeing of all slaves. The majority of anti-slavery sympathizers favored a gradual emancipation as proposed by Jefferson. Many who desired the prohibition of the slave trade, to prevent an increase of slavery, were willing to accept the existing institution, as an evil, but as one necessary to our social and industrial condition. The wisest of the friends of the negro were willing to be content with one battle at a time.

On the part of the South the opposition to active anti-slavery measures in all these early days, was temporizing; nearly all admitted slavery to be wrong in the abstract, and tacitly admitted that the time for its abolition must come. Church bodies, afterward the most formidable champions of the system, were its opponents and mere temporary necessity and advisability, were usually its excuse. By the year 1807, the public conscience of the slave-holding section was seared; the poison of the pernicious sore upon the body politic was coursing in its veins. Men found the negro a good thing to have, to breed, to sell and speculate

in. Indeed, the desire of Virginia "breeders" to profit by the stoppage of importation, at the expense of Southern States, was a valuable assistance in securing the suppressive legislation. Slavery now ceased to have apologists, having at last found defenders, who quoted Mosaic law, Greek history, and Latin classics, to prove that God had intended Rhode Island skippers and Spanish free-sailors to steal men and women on the Guinea coast and sell them to the Southern planter. They told this lie until they believed it, and, from the time when ended the first dispensation, with the lopping off the boughs, until 1863, the attack and defense of the root of slavery never ceased.

This was the second dispensation, which commenced with the year 1808.

From 1808 to 1818 no vitally important step was taken in regard to slavery, in or out of Congress. The anti-slavery spirit was growing in every Northern State, and those demands were formulating, which contemplated the absolute abolition of the system. In March, 1818, the delegate from the Territory of Missouri, which embraced the present States of Missouri and Arkansas, submitted a petition for the admission of so much of the Territory as now bears the name of Missouri, as a State. Mr. Tallmadge, of New York, proposed an amendment to the bill, which provided against the introduction of slavery in Missouri,

and for the freedom of all children born within its limits, after admission, upon reaching the age of twenty-five years. Mr. Tallmadge and Mr. Fuller, of the same State, supported the amendment in able yet moderate speeches. It is curious to read to-day the words of these then advanced thinkers, and note their disclaimers of any intention to interfere with the *status quo* in existing States; to see how readily they accepted the Southern extension of the interpretation of the Constitution, which was claimed to recognize and protect the institution of slavery. Moderate as were these speeches, they called forth an outburst of fury from the Southern members, that rivaled the best efforts of the later Lecompton days. One member from south of Mason and Dixon's line, rather inconsequently, though eloquently, dragged in Cæsar and the ides of March; another accused Tallmadge of talking to the galleries and endeavoring to excite a servile rebellion; a third said that the member had kindled a flame which oceans of blood could not quench. Mr. Tallmadge, goaded beyond the point of policy, then made a speech which was one of the first, having the true, manly, independent ring, ever made in Congress in the slavery contest. This redoubled the fury of a debate already sufficiently bitter. The struggle continued until the month of March, 1820. Every expedient known to legislation was brought to bear for and



against the amendment, and a later one of the same tenor. Early in 1820, Maine being a candidate for admission to the Union, the bill to that effect was loaded down with a rider giving unconditional admission to Missouri. Then a bill was introduced prohibiting forever the establishing of slavery north or west of the Territory of Missouri.

The restrictionists had a small working majority in the House; the anti-restrictionists in the Senate. In the House the restricting amendment was adopted, the Senate disagreed, and, as neither body would recede from its position, a conference committee was appointed and a settlement effected, upon the basis of which Missouri was admitted. This was the famous Missouri Compromise. By its provisions Missouri was to be admitted as a State, and Arkansas erected as a Territory without any anti-slavery condition. In consideration of this concession it was agreed that slavery be forever prohibited in all the territory north and west of Missouri and Arkansas. This compromise was effected in March, 1820, the House giving a vote of ninety in its favor to eighty-seven opposed. Of the ninety, but fourteen were from free States; of the eighty-seven all were from free States.

In November of the same year Missouri applied for admission, providing in her constitution for the permanent protection of slavery, and forbidding the residence of any free colored man within her

limits. The latter provision was stricken out, and Missouri admitted, slavery gaining its first great advantage against a North so nearly united, only by the aid of the votes of the weak-kneed Northern members. This compromise paved the way for the Kansas and Nebraska troubles and the Le-compton outrage. Randolph of Virginia, a devoted opponent of restriction, voted and argued during all the earlier stages of the contest against any measure which imposed the smallest condition upon the admission of Missouri, and, in debate, coined the famous phrase "dough face," applying it to those who favored compromise.

The years from 1820 to 1838 were characterized by a deepening antagonism between the parties to the great struggle. Abolitionist societies grew and multiplied; a National society of the kind was formed; petitions from these rained constantly upon Congress. Many residents of the District of Columbia petitioned for the gradual abolition of slavery in that district. The whole subject involved in the petitions was referred to a committee of which Pinckney, of South Carolina, was chairman. That committee reported that Congress had no constitutional power to abolish slavery in any State; that its abolition in the District of Columbia was inexpedient and dangerous; that any memorials or petitions upon the subject thereafter received, be at once laid upon the table, without read-

ing, publication, reference, or other attention. This precious report was adopted.

The Senate, not to be behind in wisdom and liberality, and in compliance with a sapient suggestion in the annual message of the President, passed a bill prohibiting the circulation of any abolition document, paper, book or picture, through the mails in any slave State, prescribed heavy penalties for mailing such matter, forbade postmasters, under special penalties, to deliver it, and provided that it be burned. John C. Calhoun drew this inquisitorial bill and Van Buren gave a casting vote in its favor.

Such is, in mere outline, the history of the anti-slavery struggle in England and the United States, up to the time when Mr. Giddings was elected a Representative in Congress. The social and political condition of the United States was at its worst. Every day of the century had given slavery a new advantage. Society in the North as well as the South, was corrupted by its fatal influence; the people had proved the truth and wisdom of Pope's warning against vice; familiarity had made slavery, first viewed with horror and aversion, the dearest sin of its partisans, while to the masses in the North it was an object of indulgent apology or indifference.

Open opposition to the institution meant ridicule, scoffing, and ostracism in the North; hatred,

slander, abuse, assault, and death in the South. The friends of slavery were united in Congress and at the polls; they commanded splendid legislative ability, which was supplemented by the toadyism, cowardice and indifference of the North, until they controlled a majority, upon every question involving their cherished institution. Every Northern man who surrendered to them they used, patronized, and despised; such as refused subservience, they strove to silence by fair means or foul. They swaggered in the halls of legislation, with pistols, bowie knives, and canes,—ready to piece out argument with violence and murder; they goaded sensitive men to anger—then killed them in duels; they sought to crush out free speech and the right of petition, and to make the councils of the American people pander to their lust for power, wealth, and ease.

The church, formerly opposed to slavery, was corrupt to the core; pulpits were disgraced by the impious sophisms which were daily and hourly repeated in Congress and in the prostituted columns of the Southern press. The first chapter of Romans gives a picture which is scarcely too strong for transfer to this page of American history.

To such a Congress Giddings went as the Representative of an anti-slavery constituency, which had shortly before been moved to its depths upon the subject, by the pictures and appeals of Wells,

the devoted advocate of abolition. Himself in warm sympathy with the cause, he could not have found in the United States a constituency more loyal and consistent in its support, nor could that constituency have found a man more fit to bear their colors to the field.

## IV.

It was on the 24th day of November, 1838, that Mr. Giddings set out for Washington, to assume the seat which he was destined to fill for twenty-one years, with so much honor to himself and so great advantage to his country and to the cause of humanity. He went, a *novus homo*, to a body which had lived half its allotted term; to duties far beyond any he had ever assumed, to a life and atmosphere as alien to that of his home and State as could well be imagined. His capital was clearness of brain, strength of body, honesty of purpose, and a deep and solemn sense of responsibility to his God, to himself, and to his constituency. Beyond all this he had retained, to a degree very rare in these over-sophisticated days, a simplicity and faith in men and motives which were destined to be sadly shocked by his early months of contact with the legislative world. To his honor be it said that, while he was compelled, by later experience, to modify his estimate of others, he was never less simple, less strictly and sternly conscientious in

his dealings with himself, never less single-minded than when he left his pleasant home in Jefferson on that raw and inclement November day.

Upon setting forth he opened a journal intended for the refreshment of his memory and the amusement of his own family. With the directness and lack of reserve which can be found only in such records, he continued to set down, throughout this first session, simple outlines of his plans, thoughts, impressions, and experiences, which constitute the best possible index to his character. Much contained in its pages is now trite and irrelevant; much can not be published without a breach of the confidence of the illustrious man who penned its lines, well toward a half century since, but there remains enough available for use in these pages to well repay the care with which it has been preserved.

The journal tells little save of the monotonous incidents of the journey until, having left Wheeling and crossed the Alleghanies by coach, the traveler and his companions encountered at Frederick another party of Congressmen hastening to Washington. Under date of November 29th, Mr. Giddings says of this meeting:

“This morning, soon after breakfast, we were joined by a number of members of Congress who had traveled night and day, without any stopping, except to eat their meals. Among them I was

introduced to a gentleman by the name of Crockett, a name familiar to most of our American people, for, I think, few among us are ignorant of the biography of David Crockett, his father. The son appears to possess few of the leading traits of character which distinguished his father. He seemed to be a modest, unassuming man, and is said to be very amiable in his character and disposition. Thomas Corwin, of Ohio, also formed one of the company. He is a man of middle size, well built, with dark complexion and black eyes. He was born in the lower walks of life, and up to the time he was two-and-twenty, probably never thought of rising from obscurity. In 1812 he was a wagoner in the Northwestern army. At that time, it is said his unrivalled wit and the brilliancy of his imagination used to draw around a lazy throng, during the long evenings, and he then prided himself as much, probably, on attracting the notice and admiration of teamsters and soldiers, as he now does on standing forth as one of the most brilliant orators in the councils of the nation."

This description is interesting as showing the first impression made upon Mr. Giddings by a man with whom he was destined for so many years to be constantly associated.

The following bit of description of the ride over the Baltimore & Ohio railroad to Washington, which was evidently Mr. Giddings' first journey by



rail, is also worth quoting. It follows the foregoing passage, under the same date:

“At 11 o'clock about one hundred and twenty passengers seated in three cars, carrying from forty to sixty passengers each, started upon the Baltimore & Ohio railroad, for Washington. The cars are well carpeted, and the seats cushioned. We had also a stove in each car which rendered them comfortably warm. Thus seated, some conversing in groups, others reading newspapers, and some from loss of sleep in traveling, sleeping in their seats, we were swept along at the rate of fifteen miles per hour. At the usual hour our candles were lighted, and we presented the appearance of three drawing rooms filled with guests, traveling by land. At about 7 o'clock we arrived at Washington city. The moment we stopped, we were surrounded on every side with runners, porters, hackmen, and servants—one calling to know if you would go to Brown's, another if you would take a hack, etc. They are a source of great annoyance which the police ought to prevent.”

On the evening of Saturday, December 1st, a caucus of the Whig members of the House was held, preliminary to organization. This Mr. Giddings attended, but passes in his journal with no further comment than the remark, “I was pleased with the talent, foresight, and acumen exhibited by the leaders of our party: Sergeant, of Pennsyl-

vania; Bell, of Tennessee, and Evans, of Maine, are among the leaders.

On the following Monday, the 3d of December, the House organized, and Mr. Giddings with other new members, presented his credentials, was sworn, and took his seat. After passing very briefly the formalities which preceded adjournment for the day, Mr. Giddings continued, in his journal, as follows: "I this day, for the first time, had an opportunity of observing many of the distinguished men of the Nation, and I confess I was disappointed in their appearance. There was not that dignity of carriage about them which I expected. Among them was John Q. Adams, formerly President of the United States, and now Representative from Massachusetts. He was, strictly speaking, educated a politician, and has continued in political life from his youth up to this time. He is said to have spent more than twenty-eight years of his life at foreign courts. He has held many responsible offices under the Government, and is said always to have acquitted himself with honor. He is about five feet eight inches in height, very bald, low forehead, and nothing about the shape of his head that indicates unusual talent, yet his physiognomy has something of an intellectual appearance. He is truly regarded as a venerable personage."

Mr. Adams was at that time for various reasons

the most notable man in the House. The second President of his family, a man of the highest culture and widest knowledge ; and who had been all his life a student of books and a student of men ; at once scholar, poet, man of affairs, diplomat, and statesman, with the polish given by years of residence at the most polite courts of Europe, laid upon such a foundation as nature and early culture had given, he came to the House of Representatives the first ex-President of the United States who had ever taken a seat in its membership. He nominally represented a Whig constituency, but he admitted the right of no party to dictate his action ; he sat, as few have ever done, a true representative of the people, knowing no law but that which imposed upon him the obligation to do right and to shun wrong, fearless and feared, imperious, dictatorial, just—what wonder that the grand old man was the foremost figure in that chamber, and that the novice upon the threshold of political life, should have paused, amid all the excitement of his entry, to draw a portrait of him. Neither then knew that the vigorous young westerner had come into the field to relieve the guard which the brave veteran had so long maintained in the cause of humanity ; that the two were destined for a time to serve side by side, then the mantle of the elder to fall upon his comrade's shoulders ; that the achievements of the two should represent to posterity

more efficient service in the cause of the negro slave than any other record.

An entry in the journal, under the date of December 4th, clearly illustrates the honesty and straightforwardness of Giddings. It is as follows: "I also learned to-day that a resolution was passed at the last session of the present Congress, appropriating to each member a copy of certain books, to the number of some sixty volumes, and of the value of from five to ten hundred dollars, and, being a member of this Congress, the question is now in my mind, whether I ought to take the books. In this way some forty to fifty thousand dollars of the public funds have been extracted from the public treasury and given to members, by way of perquisites, over and above their compensation. Now, if the pay of members is not sufficient, I would raise it; if it be sufficient, why take more without letting the people know it? But the members seem to think it of little importance."

Read what he says in his entry for December 14th: "It is a fact, which every man of observation must see, by spending a few days in the Representatives' hall, that there is a vast difference in the character of the members from the North and South. During this week every person present must have witnessed the high and important bearing of the Southern men; their self-important airs, their over-

bearing manners, while the Northern men, even on the subject of slavery, are diffident and forbearing. I have myself come to the honest conclusion that our Northern friends are, in fact, afraid of these Southern bullies. I have bestowed much thought upon the subject; I have made inquiry, and think we have no Northern man who dare boldly and fearlessly declare his abhorrence of slavery and the slave trade. This kind of fear I never experienced, nor shall I submit to it now. When I came here I had no thought of participating in debate at all, but particularly I intended to keep silence this winter, but, since I have seen our Northern friends so backward and delicate, I have determined to express my own views and declare my own sentiments, and risk the effects. For that purpose I have drawn up a resolution calling for information as to the slave trade in the District of Columbia, which, among other things, calls for a statement of the number of slaves who have murdered themselves within that District during the last five years, after being sold for foreign markets, and the number of children who have been murdered by their parents during said time, under the apprehension of immediate separation for sale at a foreign market, and the amount of revenue collected on sale of licenses to deal in human flesh and blood. I showed the resolutions to several friends, who advise me not to present them on two accounts:

first, that it will enrage the Southern members; secondly, that it will injure me at home. But I have determined to risk both, for I would rather lose my election at home than suffer the insolence of these Southerners here. Mr. Fletcher, of Boston, is the only man that consents to my presenting the resolutions. This morning a friend called on me to show me a scurrilous attack made upon me in the Government paper of to-day. I am in some doubt whether to call the public attention to it or not. However, it seems to render a full declaration of my sentiments more necessary and proper."

Only two weeks in Congress, a stranger among men of years of experience in legislation and politics, yet ready to throw down the gauntlet to slavery, knowing that such an act would call down upon his head the rage of all the South, and warned that it would weaken him at home! Only two weeks in Congress and those passed in silence, yet already marked for abuse by the journals of the opposition! The words quoted were embodied in no stump speech, newspaper communication nor even in a confidential message to a friend. It was a sacred pledge made with his own conscience, and spread upon a page which no eye was intended or expected to see. Nor was it the ignorant bravado of inexperience, destined to disappear at the first danger, but a solemn self-

dedication, to which he never for a moment proved false. Almost ten years later, on the 4th day of December, 1848, after meeting the daily temptation and demoralization of life in Congress long and constantly enough, to have lost at least the freshness and sentiment of the debutant, he wrote in his journal:

"News from Columbus shows that our friends, the Free-soilers, are separating from each other. Mr. — writes me that he shall attend no more Free-soil meetings, and seems to think that the party will, of course, dissolve into its original elements in consequence of his leaving it. I am disgusted with the vanity and want of principle that characterize all his thoughts. Men appear to think of nothing, talk of nothing, and act with no purpose, but that of party. Attempts are made to get me to go into the Whig party in order to secure an election to the Senate. Thank God, I have never for one moment entertained the desire of such an election at the sacrifice of principle."

Could anything ever recorded in the way of a declaration of motive and intent, give a clearer picture of the maker? Honesty, singleness of purpose, fidelity to his principles and to himself—all these stand out in every line, and one may laboriously read every sentence of every speech made by Joshua R. Giddings, in Congress, or upon the stump, from the time he penned these first quoted



words, until his earthly account was closed, and find no sentiment inconsistent with the high and unselfish standard which he then set for himself. He loved approbation,—and what man does not?—yet he never condescended to the most harmless act of the demagogue; he loved place and power, and both might have been his in barter for his silence; no place of all in the gift of an American President or Congress, but would have been held well paid for by the vacancy of his seat, yet he never had an ambition that he did not bid to get behind him, that he might go forward in poverty and through contumely preaching to men the gospel of justice and humanity.

From day to day this journal of Mr. Giddings' is full of bits of naif and characteristic criticism of men and methods, which it is difficult to resist quoting. He tells with quiet humor how the respectability of a Washington man while living, is judged, after his death, by the number of carriages which follow him to the grave, and how, also, many of these carriages go empty. Then he says: "If a member of Congress dies, the usual procession is constituted of all the hacks in the city, which are employed to follow the hearse whether they have any passengers in them or not. A monument, costing sometimes \$300 or \$400, is also erected. and the whole expense is paid from the public treasury, including \$150 to the family where the



member dies." After telling of the funeral of a member which occurred at Baltimore in 1837, when "members of both Houses took seats in the cars, followed the corpse to Baltimore, staid over night, had their dinners and wines, lodgings and breakfast, all at the expense of the Nation," he adds: "If members can go to Baltimore at the public expense, I do not see why they cannot take a trip to Philadelphia, or New York, or even go to Boston or beyond the mountains." Subsequent events have justified this forecast.

Mr. Giddings, himself a man of rare dignity, shows constant signs of displeasure at the lack of that quality in his fellows. He also laments the serious waste of time and of money involved in an adjournment over Saturday as well as Sunday, "when hundreds of people are living in want, because Congress has not time to pass upon their just claims." One more quotation from the pages of this diary relating to the impressions of those first days must suffice. On December 10th he wrote: "The subject of moving a petition regarding Haytian independence occupied the day. It is amusing and yet astonishing to see the views entertained by most of the members on the subject of abolition. At the South it is the general impression that it is designed to create a general rebellion among the slaves, and have them cut their masters' throats. At the North they have no idea as to

what constitutes abolition. Northern men seem to be afraid to come out and declare their sentiments. They appear to feel great delicacy on the subject. Instead of stating the question of abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia, and the slave trade between the States, they keep at a distance from the subject, and, as yet, no one has come forth, and, with plainness set forth the claims at the North and all seem afraid so to do."

On the 29th of December Mr. Giddings spoke for the first time. He says: "The subject of granting pensions came up in debate; it being a subject upon which I thought myself possessed of tolerable information, and the House being thin, I ventured for the first time to address the House. I expected to be greatly embarrassed and to have my voice tremble, but was surprised to find my voice full and to be able to make myself heard through the whole hall. I spoke but a moment, not intending to occupy time, but wishing to try my voice."

On the 11th day of December, Mr. Atherton, a New Hampshire, doughface, arose in his place and offered a series of resolutions denying the constitutional right of the General Government to interfere with slavery in the various States, *or in the District of Columbia*, denouncing persons who had forwarded anti-slavery petitions to the House, for endeavoring to accomplish, by indirect means, what

could not be constitutionally done, and, finally, reaffirming more stringently the Pinckney resolution, providing that all petitions upon the subject of slavery be laid upon the table, without reading, reference, printing, or debate. These are the measures which have passed into history as the "Atherton gag resolutions." On the succeeding day they were put to a vote separately, and passed by a vote of one hundred and twenty-six yeas, to seventy-three nays, Mr. Giddings voting, as a matter of course, in the negative. This was the first important measure upon which he gave a vote. The diary entry of the 11th says: "The rules were then suspended and Mr. Atherton arose to sustain his resolutions by a written speech, at the close of which he called for the previous question. Excitement now arose, . . . hisses and murmurs of contempt for the *man* and *the act* became audible. . . ." These italics, which are Mr. Giddings', convey very eloquently his own endorsement of the opinions expressed in those hisses and murmurs. He did not then write much; he said nothing, only recording by his vote his estimation of the matter. Yet there is no question that his being brought thus face to face at the very outset of his career in Congress, with the arrogant assumption of the slave power, had much to do with inducing him to take instant and firm position as

an avowed opponent of the system, its champions, and their Northern lackeys.

On the evening of December 31st, Mr. Giddings attended a party given by Mr. Gules, to Whig Senators and Representatives. There he met, and talked with Adams, Clay, Preston, and other famous men. Already his few weeks' observation of Adams had made Mr. Giddings a devoted admirer of that great man. He notes in his account of the party, that he "took the earliest opportunity to engage in conversation with the venerable ex-President." Proceeding with the account of the entertainment, he describes the lavish luxury of the table, the profusion of wines, and the flow of wit and wisdom, closing with this philosophical comment: "The morality of these parties may well be doubted, but they appear necessary, in order to bring the members into that acquaintance with each other which is desirable."

On New Year's day Mr. Giddings, conforming to the usual custom, paid a number of formal calls. He describes minutely his reception at the White House, with all the splendor of its semi-royal appointments, which was naturally impressive to one so recently removed from the simplicity of the West. He then made some unimportant calls, concluding his day with one which must be described in his own words: "Still one more call remained to be paid on this New Year's day. I

had been invited to call upon our venerable ex-President. To his residence I now bent my way. In a retired mansion we found him and his lady, surrounded by some dozen friends, who showed, in their countenances and conversation, that they had called in reality, to pay their respects to this great man, whose name will hereafter fill the brightest page of American history. Here we met and saluted the aged statesman, in a large and comfortable drawing room, with his matronly lady, her sister, a daughter-in-law, and two grandchildren. We found him in the midst of a truly domestic circle; no noise or bustle interrupted that expression of good will which we all felt toward him. His countenance glowed with benevolence, and kindness towards his friends around him. We were introduced to the members of his family, sat awhile, and, after some interesting conversation, we left this interesting man, feeling that we had seen a specimen of true greatness connected with genuine republican simplicity. Mr. Adams belongs to no local district, to no political party, but to the Nation and to the people; he is elected by his district in Massachusetts, comes here with his family during the sessions of Congress, and keeps house by himself. While in the House of Representatives, he consults with no one, takes the advice of no one, and holds himself accountable to no one but the Nation. He belongs as

much to the former age as to this—perhaps he may be said to be the connecting link between the former generation and the one now in active life.” So closely does this description apply to the attitude taken by Mr. Giddings in his Congressional career, so evident is the admiration which is shown in every word which he wrote regarding Mr. Adams, that we have good warrant for believing that the influence of the elder man was decisive in determining the course of his young friend. Friends, indeed, they soon became. Their first meeting, their gradual warming to each other, and the full measure of their reciprocal affection are amply witnessed by Giddings letters and journals. In an autograph album kept by Mr. Giddings during the year 1844, and written in a trembling, almost illegible hand, are the following lines, embodying an expression of true and sentimental affection, rarely felt and more rarely expressed, between men. They have never been published, and the transcript here given is exact and entire.

TO JOSHUA R. GIDDINGS,  
OF JEFFERSON, ASHTABULA COUNTY, OHIO.

When first together here we meet  
Askance each other we behold  
The bitter mingling with the sweet,  
The warm attempered by the cold;  
We seek, with searching ken to find  
A soul congenial to our own,

For mind, in sympathy with mind,  
Instinctive dreads to walk alone.  
And here, from regions wide apart,  
We came our purpose to pursue,  
Each with a warm and honest heart,  
Each with spirit firm and true.  
Intent, with anxious aim to learn,  
Each other's character we scan,  
And soon the difference discern  
Between the fair and faithless man.  
And here, with scrutinizing eye,  
A kindred soul with mine to see  
And longing bosom to descry  
I sought, and found at last—in thee.  
Farewell, my friend! and, if once more  
We meet within this hall again,  
Be ours the blessing to restore  
Our country's, and the *rights of men*.

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS,  
of Quincy, Massachusetts.

H. R. U. S., Washington, 17 June, 1844.

Anniversary of the battle of Bunker Hill.

When these lines were written Adams was nearly seventy-eight years of age, too sober, too wise, also too great a man to pen a page of verses in idle compliment. He loved the younger man whom he had taught so much, and that love was returned with a warmth and veneration that made the friendship between these two—representing the antipodes of education, training, experience, and social surroundings—one of the most remarkable and touching in history. Simply the recognition of mutual honesty, sincerity, devotion, and power, in connection with a cause which both held sacred; simply the standing together against

“the whips and scorns of time;  
the oppressers' wrong; the proud man's contumely,”

had been sufficient to overcome all the influences and circumstances which combined to render friendship or love between them a thing most unlikely.

Although, as before stated, Mr. Giddings had once briefly addressed the House, his real debut was made on the 5th of January, 1839. His own account of the matter is given in full, for the reason that the speech then made was effectual in establishing him in the esteem of his colleagues, as a man of unusual boldness and ability, and because the simple and unreserved statement gives an excellent key to his character.

“Friday, January 4th. This day nothing occurred worthy of notice, except as its transactions connected myself with proceedings which may hereafter bring my name before the public. Mr. Jones, who claimed a seat here as delegate from Wisconsin, had been elected in 1836, served two years, as limited by the organic laws, and, at the expiration of his term, which was in October last, again appeared in the field as a candidate and was defeated. This defeat was mostly attributed to his connection with the duel in which Mr. Cilley fell last winter in this city. After his defeat he came to this city and claimed to hold his seat in the House during the present Congress,



urging that his time did not commence until December, 1837, and that his service and receiving pay in 1836 were all in his own wrong. I merely believe his object to be the travel fees from Wisconsin and his *per diem*, which amount to about two thousand dollars, and think that he ought not thus to carry off the National treasure. I have tried to get some older member to introduce a resolution denying his right to compensation, which I know he has already drawn. But, as no older member will do it, I have determined to take it upon myself, and, thinking that justice to him required me to apprise him of my design, have written him a note, stating my intention, and conveyed it to him through the medium of the post-office.

“Saturday, January 5th. I spent the whole morning in preparing to sustain the resolution which I intended to present to the House. I had yet many misgivings as to my success before that body; whether I should not be so much embarrassed as to be unable to proceed. Mr. Jones is a professed duelist; his conduct in the matter I considered disgraceful; if I spoke I knew I should speak my mind as soon as I should become warmed with my subject. Many of the members, I knew, dared not speak as they thought, on account of Mr. Jones’ dueling character. Of this I entertained not the slightest fear; all my appre-

hensions were lest I should not succeed as well as I intended, in exposing what I deemed a gross abuse of the situation he held. I went to the House with fear and trembling. I had written Jones that I should bring forward the resolution, so now I could not retreat. The House was called to order and the clerk was reading the journal. I had my resolution written, and when the clerk had finished reading was on my feet with my resolution in my hand and called the Speaker's name, but he responded to the call of Mr. Mason, who sent to the chair a resolution almost in the very words of the one I held. I felt relieved from my embarrassment, and when the resolution was read, the Speaker remarked that he had a communication from Mr. Jones. The reading was called for. In it Mr. Jones stated that he had drawn his mileage and *per diem*, but on the evening previous had received a note from Mr. Giddings which he therewith transmitted to the Speaker, together with the funds he had drawn from the treasury. When my name was mentioned, all eyes were turned upon me; I was a new member, and all seemed to look with astonishment at the course I had dared to take. Some of my friends came to me and enquired why I had done as I did; others appeared to think me too diffident to carry out what I had commenced, and came to me to encourage and urge me forward. General Mason took the floor,

of course. When he was speaking I was advised to withdraw and let the older members manage the matter. When General Mason was through I tried to get the floor and failed, Mr. Bouldin, of Virginia, obtaining it. I soon saw that he had no correct view of the subject, and felt somewhat emboldened. He spoke for half an hour, and when he ceased I strove for the floor again, but Mr. Wise obtained it, and I saw that Mr. Thomas, of Maryland, an old member, and one who spoke often, was determined to get it next, and of course I knew he would get it, as he is the leader of the Van Buren party, and a favorite of the Speaker. I went to him and requested the privilege of speaking before he did; this he refused, and I determined that, if I followed him, he should hereafter be at least a little careful in throwing himself before me or in my way. My friends now came and urged me to insist upon having the floor, but, as I expected, Mr. Thomas obtained it. I took notice of his argument, and when he sat down I succeeded in getting the floor, and, to my utter surprise, found my voice full and clear. I felt a little embarrassment, but cared nothing for that while my voice should appear natural. Having made my introduction, I proceeded to answer the argument of Mr. Bouldin. I had hardly stated the position he had taken, when he saw the light in which I was about to place him, and at once requested the

floor to explain. I yielded; he explained. I proceeded in my argument, but in less than five minutes Mr. Bouldin and Mr. Wise were both on their feet wishing to explain. Cries of "No!" "No!" were heard, but I yielded. By this time I had thrown off my embarrassment, and, when they resumed their seats I let fall a good-natured joke, which drew forth a burst of laughter. I proceeded to the argument of Thomas; he, too, was on the floor, and I refused to yield it. I proceeded; he again solicited the floor, and I yielded it. My friends now loudly remonstrated against my yielding the floor any more. Thomas explained and sat down. I proceeded with a determination to scorch him for his want of delicacy in not permitting me to precede him in the argument. I took ample vengeance on him, and finally got through the argument with tolerable satisfaction to myself, and, I am told, to the satisfaction of my friends."

The effect of this speech upon Mr. Giddings himself and upon his fellow members is indicated in his journal entry of January 7th. He says: "A member of Congress, when he comes unknown to Washington, attracts little attention among his fellow members. With citizens and officers of Government his official character is a sufficient recommendation to command their highest respect and constant attention. But with his fellow mem-

bers he attracts no notice whatever, until he makes some display of his powers, tact, or of political management. I have now fairly made my debut and to-day I fancied myself, on entering the hall, greeted more warmly than heretofore; members who had previously barely paid the passing salutation, now came to my seat, with great politeness inquired after my health, and many of them congratulated me upon the favorable reception of my speech. . . . I now felt that I had fairly entered upon the business of a member. I felt myself entitled to express my views more freely than I had heretofore done. Many of the most celebrated lawyers in the House and of the Nation, took occasion to express their high gratification at the manner in which I had 'wound up' (as they said) the chairman of the judiciary committee."

On the 21st of January Mr. Adams created a decided sensation in the House, by arising to a question of privilege and giving a statement of his views on the subject of abolition. He said that he had lately received several letters threatening his life, and had decided it was proper to place himself distinctly before the people in the matter. Permission being granted he explained that his general views squared with those of other abolitionists; that he favored the interdiction of the slave trade between the States, and the recognition

of the independence of Hayti, but was not prepared to favor the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. He would, however, did he not doubt the constitutionality of such a measure, approve of the removal of the capital to some place where slavery did not exist.

Mr. Giddings says of the matter: "His speech created a great sensation. It seemed to convince the South that Mr. Adams was not so great an enemy to them as they had supposed, and some of the Northern members appeared to think he had not been as strongly opposed to slavery as they had thought him to be; others said that he had but expressed the same views which they had always understood him to possess. Mr. Slade, of Vermont, who is the greatest Abolitionist in the House, seemed to be very apprehensive that the speech would have a bad influence on the subject of abolition. He drew up interrogatories to Mr. Adams, for the purpose of drawing from him further explanations, and submitted them to me. This I considered useless, having no hope that Mr. Adams would make further disclosures of his views to Mr. Slade than he had to the world. I am, however, fully of the opinion, from the language used by Mr. Adams, and the cautious manner in which he expressed himself, that his want of readiness to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, is not

owing to any doubt as to the power of Congress to do so; nor to any other reason other than a question as to the policy of such action. The difficulty that has often presented itself to my mind is, that if Congress should pass a law to abolish slavery in the District, before it could take effect the slaves would all be taken out of the District and the law would find none here to take effect upon. But, if Congress should first pass a law prohibiting the taking of any slave out of the District, that would keep them here, and, when a law to abolish slavery should pass, it would have the effect to liberate from nine to ten thousand slaves. Of Mr. Adams' views beyond what he has publicly expressed, I know nothing, but these thoughts have often run through my own mind. I think, them worthy of serious reflection by the philanthropic."

"Thursday, January 29. While in committee of the whole on the state of the Union members speak with perfect freedom. Indeed, it does not seem to be of any importance whether a speech made while in such committee has any relation whatever to the subject under debate. . . . Seeing the wide range of debate it struck me as a favorable place to bring forward the subject of slavery, which is prohibited while in the House. For this purpose I digested and reduced to paper

a plan for commencing an attack upon the slave trade in the District of Columbia. . . .”

Mr. Giddings failed to obtain the floor, and was obliged for the time to defer his speech.

On Wednesday, January 30, he made the following journal entry: “This day Mr. Slade, of Vermont, came to me with an expression of great anxiety in regard to the exposition which Mr. Adams had made of his views concerning slavery. He appears to apprehend great results from these disclosures. Not feeling any very serious apprehensions on the subject, I told him that the opinions of Mr. Adams would pass off like the opinions of any other man. That I intended to give my own opinion as a counterbalance to that of Mr. Adams. He desired to know how I should bring the matter forward, and I told him how. He was at first incredulous as to the feasibility of my plan, but soon agreed that I was correct and, before he left, promised to make an effort himself, upon the same plan.”

Then follows a short description of a scene which excited Mr. Giddings' indignation to the highest pitch, put a keen edge upon his purpose, and had an effect in determining his future action: “This day a coffle of about sixty slaves, male and female, passed through the streets of Washington, chained together, on their way South. They were accompanied by a large wagon, in which were



placed the more feeble females and children of such tender years as to be unable to walk. A *being*, in the shape of a man, was on horseback, with a large whip in his hand, with which he occasionally chastised those who, through fatigue or indolence, were tardy in their movements. This was done in the day time, in public view of all who at the time happened to be so situated as to see the barbarous spectacle."

"Monday, February 4th. This being petition day I had determined on raising a question as to the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. This I communicated to my friend Fletcher,\* who was incredulous as to getting up the question, but pledged himself to sustain me provided I would get the subject before the House. At about 3 o'clock the State of Ohio was called on for petitions. I obtained the floor, and, after presenting some others on various subjects, I brought forward one for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, and moved that it be referred to the committee on said District. The chair, at this time occupied by Mr. Briggs, of Massachusetts, decided that the petition must lie on the table. From this decision I appealed, and the chair having stated the appeal, I obtained the floor and proceeded to argue the question of the prohibition of petition by resolutions of the 11th and 12th of

\* Richard Fletcher, of Massachusetts.

December. Mr. Garland, of Louisiana, called me to order. There was much uneasiness apparent among the members. The speaker, Mr. Polk, resumed the chair and desired me to state distinctly the motion I had made. This I did, when he pronounced me in order. I then proceeded with my remarks. I went on, mentioned the resolutions, and showed that they did not extend to the petition under consideration. After this I pronounced the resolutions opposed to the Constitution and *ipso facto* void, and proceeded to demonstrate that position." After much confusion and technical skirmishing, Mr. Giddings, finding that he was actually blockading the House, withdrew his appeal from a declaration of the chair that he was out of order, and let the matter drop, having accomplished his purpose in defining his own position and entering a protest against the outrageous Atherton gag and its predecessors.

On the 7th of February, Mr. Clay, then a candidate for the Presidency and under the party lash, made a speech in the Senate, attacking the Abolitionists in Congress and the country. Mr. Clay had, in certain youthful speeches, declared himself in favor of universal human liberty. In this declaration he was no doubt sincere, but the leaders of his party demanded as a condition of their support in the Presidential race, that he should clear his skirts of the imputation of being a sympathizer

with the negro. The speech in question was the result; while it earned him the commendation of Calhoun and men of that ilk, it lost him much of the respect of the North and was a most unfortunate utterance. Mr. Giddings had at that time met Mr. Clay several times in company, and had once dined with him. There was between them no intimacy. Clay was the Senator from Kentucky, one of the foremost in the upper house, an exponent of popular opinions, an unsurpassed orator, the idol of a great constituency, and, in all particulars, one of the leading men of the day. Giddings was a Representative of but two months' standing, who had only become known as the ally of a weak and despised minority. The following words from the journal of the day will illustrate as well as any act of Mr. Giddings his fearless boldness in the cause of right and justice: "My friend Fletcher came to me and gave me a description of the speech. He stated that Mr. Clay had said, substantially, that Congress had no right to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, unless it were necessary for the accommodation of Congress, or the benefit of the people of the District. This was different from what I had before understood, and I knew would disappoint the expectations of the people whom I represent. I had publicly avowed my adherence to Mr. Clay for President, in preference to Mr. Van Buren, and I felt that the speech

would place me at home in an attitude unexpected by me and by my friends. Before I left my seat therefore, I dispatched a note to Mr. Clay demanding distinctly whether 'he believed Congress to possess the right of abolishing slavery in this District *when no other reason existed for it than mere benevolence to the human family.*' "

Every effort was made by the friends of Mr. Clay to induce Mr. Giddings to withdraw his note. In conversation upon the floor of the House the latter stated that he regarded the speech as indiscreet and imprudent. Being charged, by a friend of Mr. Clay, with showing great assurance in criticizing such a man, Mr. Giddings retorted that he would not allow Mr. Clay, or any other man, to ridicule and misrepresent his constituents, and that he would take the earliest opportunity to disabuse the public mind of the false impression conveyed. The result was that Mr. Clay, having called once in the House to see Mr. Giddings and failed to find him, came again, said that he had made the speech at the request and with the advice of Northern Whigs, and that he thought its declarations were sufficient to cover the question conveyed in Mr. Giddings' note. The latter disagreed with this and the gentlemen parted coldly, Mr. Clay having lost a most valued adherent. It is stated that, as a result of this note, the Kentucky Senator modified

his speech very essentially in preparing it for publication.

On Friday, the 12th of February, Mr. Giddings took his most important step of the session. A bill was introduced in the House providing for the appropriation of \$30,000 to build a bridge over the Anacosta river.

There had, on the same day, come a petition from citizens of the District of Columbia, praying that no notice be taken of the thousands of anti-slavery petitions which had been presented to the House, denouncing them as "seditious memorials," and their authors as "fanatics," and praying that such petitions be not even received. This gave Mr. Giddings excuse and opportunity for doing what he had long wished—striking a blow at slavery in the District. Hence he moved to strike out the enacting clause of the bill, and gave his reasons in a speech, portions of which are well worthy of quotation, and which is interesting as the first connected and distinct anti-slavery speech ever made by its author. He said: "But, sir, I will assign my reasons for believing that the seat of government will be removed. It is known, sir, that the slave trade, in its worst and most abhorrent forms, is being carried on here to an alarming extent. (Here Mr. Giddings was called to order, but the chair decided him in order.) We are told by some honorable gentlemen, that the subject of

its continuance cannot be discussed in the House ; that a dissolution of the Union would follow as the inevitable consequence of any interference with the traffic on the part of Congress. On the other hand, I have come to the conclusion that Northern men, who have from their infancy been bred up in the love of liberty, where every precept impressed upon their youthful minds, every principle of their matured years, has habituated them to think of the slave trade with disgust and abhorrence, to contemplate it as only existing among barbarians and uncivilized nations, to look upon it with horror ; I say, sir, that it is my opinion that such men can never consent to continue the seat of government in the midst of a magnificent slave market. I say it distinctly to the committee, to the Nation, and to the world, that Northern men will not consent to the continuance of our National councils where their ears are assailed, while coming to the capitol, by the voice of the auctioneer publicly proclaiming the sale of human, of intelligent beings." (Several gentlemen here called Mr. Giddings to order, and he was again sustained by the chair.) He then resumed : "I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your cool and impartial decision of the question of order. I will remark that I was assigning my own reasons—not those of any other gentleman. I say, distinctly, that I have not commenced these remarks with feelings of unkindness to any man, or

to any part of this Nation. I have been induced to embrace the present opportunity by a deep and solemn sense of justice, which I think is due to the district which I represent, and to a large part of the Northern States. They, sir, feeling an honest abhorrence of the slave trade, have sent in their petitions against it. I have myself presented the petitions of many thousands of Northern freemen on the subject, but their petitions have been disregarded, and the voice of American freemen, in favor of liberty, has been silenced. Their representative sent here with authority to act for them, to speak their views, to express their wishes, has been bound, hand and foot, with a sort of legislative straight-jacket, so far as the subject of this slave trade is concerned, and his lips have been hermetically sealed, to prevent him from a declaration of their views, and from demanding their rights. Sir, (in an undertone) upon this floor I have heard gentlemen—honorable gentlemen—say that those citizens who have thus petitioned this House, should be hanged if found in Southern States. I pass any such remarks; they were made under feelings of excitement and did not express the real feelings of their authors. But, sir, while the voices of Northern freemen are silenced upon this floor, and their Representatives here are not permitted to declare the sentiments of those who sent them, we are called on to make heavy appro-

priations of their money for the benefit of this District. Many thousands of our people have endeavored to express to this House their views of the slave trade as carried on here. We refuse to hear them; we treat their petitions with contempt, but, in answer, say 'Your money shall be taken for the improvement of this city, although it be a slave market; we will not hear your objections to the slave trade, but we will tax you to build a slave market.' This, sir, is wrong; it is palpably wrong. But, sir, I was saying that the appropriation was for the benefit of this District principally; it is to be made for the benefit of the people of this District, and what is their language to those whose funds are now sought to be appropriated? The language of the people of this District is expressed in their memorials, lately presented to both houses of Congress. In those memorials the free and independent citizens who petition us in regard to the slave trade of this District are termed 'a band of fanatics;' their petitions are termed 'seditious memorials;' their efforts to stop the inhuman and barbarous practice of selling men, women, and children, are termed 'foul and unnatural.' Congress is prayed not only to refuse a reading or reference of these petitions, but we are requested not to receive such petitions. This, sir, is the language of the people of this District toward those whom I am supposed to



represent; whose sentiments on this subject of the slave trade I openly and unequivocally avow. I sir, have been honored with the high trust of representing the people thus stigmatized, and I would deem myself unworthy of the trust if I permitted such language to pass unnoticed. Honorable gentlemen have presented the memorials of the people here in both houses of Congress, and have advocated the principles, repeated and enlarged upon the language used. Sir, under all this abuse, I am asked now to contribute from the funds of the people thus abused, to the improvement of this city and for the benefit of those who thus assail their motives and stigmatize their acts. I object to the appropriation, under these circumstances. I protest against it and I repeat, that while this state of things remains, I shall be opposed to all appropriations in this District, not necessary for the convenience of Government. I take my stand here. I now avow my firm determination to give my vote for no further appropriations for this District, until the voice of these petitioners be heard and acted upon, and their prayers granted or refused—I say no appropriations except such as are really necessary for the comfortable continuance of the Government.

“I want to be understood and not misrepresented. It is the slave trade to which I now allude; not to slavery. That is another subject. On that I

may at some other time give my views; but let no man accuse me of now saying anything in regard to his right of holding his fellow man as property, or of now saying anything concerning it. What I have said and what I intend to say will refer to nothing but the slave trade. I intend to disarm my opponents of all cause in regard to the constitutional right or the power of Congress over the subject. I am aware of the feeling which gentlemen have on this subject, and I assure them of my intention not to say anything offensive to them, further than duty requires. I hope that, whoever may become excited, I may speak and act from the convictions of sober judgment. I once alluded to the statement of honorable gentlemen that we cannot interfere with the slave trade in this District without a dissolution of the Union. This threat, sir, I beg leave to say, I disregard. I will not condescend to argue the question of the dissolution of the Union, for such reasons. I will leave that question to be discussed by those who deem the slave trade in this District of more importance than the continuance of the Union. But, should a dissolution take place, the appropriation now in question would surely be of little importance.

I, sir, have alluded to the fact that, on the beautiful avenue in front of the capitol, members of Congress, during this session, have heard the harsh voice of the inhuman auctioneer, publicly selling

human beings, while they were on their way to the capitol. They have also been compelled to turn aside from their path, to permit a coffle of slaves, males and females, chained to each other by their necks, to pass on their way to this National slave market."

At this point Mr. Giddings' speech was brought prematurely to an end, as related in his diary:

"After I had spoken a few moments, Mr. Howard said he would call me to order. I demanded the question to be reduced to writing. The chair decided that I had the right to have it so reduced, and from this decision Mr. Howard appealed. Much debate and confusion followed, several members speaking at the same time, each calling the other to order, and each insisting that he was right. Much excitement prevailed, and the House became a scene of perfect confusion and uproar. Some appeared to enjoy this much; among these the venerable ex-President laughed most heartily, and, coming to my seat, advised me to insist upon my rights; not be intimidated by the course taken by the Southern men. This confusion lasted about one hour, and, as I suppose, for the purpose of restoring order, the chairman, without taking the vote of the committee on the appeal, decided that I was out of order. . . . A vote was then taken on my motion, and carried, the enacting clause of the bill being stricken out."

The effect of such a bold stand, taken, with so great success, by a young member, may be imagined. The Southern men were furious; the doughfaces dumbfounded; the citizens of the District panic-stricken; the friends of the slave jubilant. Mr. Giddings was insulted on the floor of the House, abused by the Administration press, and implored by residents of the District to reconsider his determination. A few men of the House congratulated and encouraged him.

Giddings was then for the first time exposed to the fires of hatred and envy, the temptations of wily lobbyists and the scarcely less dangerous approbation of delighted friends, which he was destined to endure for more than twenty years, and from which he escaped unscathed, unspoiled, resolute, honest, and true as when he first came to Washington. He passed the Southern men who cut him in the House, with a contempt real as was theirs assumed; he put away from him the prize of personal popularity and party advancement, offered him on condition of adhesion to the party of slavery; he assured the waiting delegations of citizens of the District that, if they would withdraw their offensive memorials, he would cease to oppose the particular bill in question, but would give no guaranty as to his future course. He met newspaper and personal assaults upon his honesty of motive, with perfect dignity and absence of irri-

tation. In a word, he at once established himself in the affection of friends, made himself respected by his enemies, taught interested opponents that he could neither be driven by abuse nor led by bribes. The session was drawing to a close, he had spoken but thrice, yet his more than twenty years' service in the House changed the estimate of him thereafter only in degree—not at all in kind. Upon the threshold of Congressional life he had yet found a recognition that gave him a distinct claim upon the House.

But little more than two weeks of the Twenty-fifth Congress remained, and that time was occupied in hurrying through appropriation bills and other formal business. But one further entry of the diary of Mr. Giddings remains to be quoted, and that not for its intrinsic significance, but because it shows that with all his aggressive boldness, with all his fearlessness he was a man of kindness of heart and of a sensitive, practical sympathy. The entry made on March 2d, the day preceding the adjournment of Congress, tells its own story:

“An incident occurred in my view that illustrates the difficulty of obtaining justice from the Government. A man named Nye has claimed about six thousand dollars from the Government for several years, and has himself personally pressed the matter for some sessions past. During the last session Mr. Whittlesey, chairman of the com-

mittee on claims, reported against it, although the Senate had reported in favor of it. Mr. Whittlesey was looked upon as an infallible authority on the subject of claims. Nye was put in jail for want of money, and suffered much. His claim again passed the Senate, and was referred to the House committee on claims. Nye himself wrote an able review of Whittlesey's report, and pointed out its errors, but many things intervened to prevent the committee from passing on it until to-day. I agreed with two or three others that we would get together and pass upon this claim, provided that it were possible to get a quorum to the committee room. This we effected, and agreed to report the bill giving him his whole claim. This was done as late as 2 o'clock P. M. When we left the room, I was in front, and Nye was at the door. I told him we had agreed to report his bill for the amount claimed. He attempted to thank me, but tears choked his utterance, and I felt deeply myself, so much so that I found tears were running down my own cheeks, and unwilling that my weakness should be discovered, I averted my face to disguise my feelings from those passing by me in front. As I turned my face, my eye rested upon Mr. Chambers, our chairman, who, though a man of rough exterior, and who has been through many a bloody battle, was so wrought upon by Nye's feeling that he wept profusely."

And so the Congress adjourned, and Mr. Giddings returned to his constituents to receive a welcome which was well appreciated, as it was fully deserved.

From this point no such accurate account of the exciting scenes through which Mr. Giddings passed as has thus far been given, will be possible; such a relation would occupy more space than may be devoted to it, and beyond that, while the official records give sufficient data for an account of the public acts of Mr. Giddings, there exists in no other years of his official life so reliable and satisfactory an index to his private views, motives, and ambitions, as the much quoted journal of the session of 1838-1839 gives. The freedom with which matters apparently trifling, have been transferred to these pages from that journal needs no apology. The mental photograph furnished is as true a likeness of the Giddings of 1855 as of him of 1839; the lines are deeper—there are marks of thought, struggle, and sorrow; there are scars of conflict, but, in everything, it is only a deepening, not a change of feature. Had these journals been continuous, their value at this day would have been incalculable, but from 1839 to 1849 we have an interval of ten years which leaves no personal record, save that found in an occasional letter or newspaper article—all else is official. During a portion of two sessions beginning in 1848

Mr. Giddings kept a second journal which has been preserved, and will be hereafter used, but even this, as it is the record of an older and busier man and member, lacks the spontaneousness, freedom and detail of the earlier one; it tells perhaps more tersely and correctly of events, but less of men and especially less of its author.



## V.

The Twenty-sixth Congress, which convened in December, 1839, and in which Mr. Giddings took his seat, was, as is invariably the case with the session preceding a Presidential election, a strongly partisan body, and one in which each party strove, with an immense show of zeal and industry, to do nothing, unless to avoid compromising itself upon any vital question, and to force its opponents to make for themselves such an injurious record, as might be useful against them in the coming campaign. Such legislative fencing is amusing to the galleries, but it is fatal to business, and the advocate of a measure, whether he be a lobbyist with a private bill to urge, or a legislator representing, as did Mr. Giddings, a vital principle, has need of no small degree of patience and philosophy to submit to the inevitable with due calmness. The anti-slavery cause was very far from popular. Southern men did not hate it less or less openly oppose it; Northern men feared it more, as the time for nomination and election drew near. Mr.

Riddle has well stated the political and social conditions of the time in these words: "Seth M. Gates, of Genessee, New York, was a member of this Congress, of profound anti-slavery convictions, and completed the quartette—Adams, Slade, Giddings, and Gates. Many Northern Whigs sympathized, but none stood by or voted with them on slavery issues. Public morals were at a low ebb. Peculation and defalcation marked the civil service, as never before or since, as we now know. Mr. Smith, of South Carolina, proclaimed in the Senate, in 1817, that governments are not bound by moral law. This had been reaffirmed by Calhoun, and was illustrated by the course of men in office. The Democrats charged the Whigs with affiliation with abolition, and pointed to the four gentlemen named above, as of their party. To parry this Mr. Clay, in the Senate, claimed that the leading writers in defense of slavery were Whigs, and cited a work exposing the fallacy of abolition, the review of Channing, "Abolition a Sedition"; "Thoughts on Domestic Slavery," and other valuable aids to human progress. Again he received the fatal commendation of Mr. Calhoun. The Florida war lingered; the Maroons found shelter in the unconstitutional everglades. The United States entered into an alliance with the bloodhounds of Cuba, and American soldiers were led by dogs. Petitions against this mode of war-

fare could not penetrate the moral atmosphere of the House. They accumulated in the Senate and the Whigs scored one against Mr. Van Buren."

In July, 1837, the slaver *Amistad*, laden with negro slaves, sailed from Havana, for a point on the southern coast of Cuba; the slaves arose in a body, killed the captain and a number of the crew, gained control of the vessel, and ordered the owners, who were on board, to steer the ship for Africa. Relying upon the ignorance of their captors and the fogginess of the weather, the Spaniards headed, instead, for the coast of the United States, making a landing at the eastern extremity of Long Island. An officer of the coast survey took possession, and began proceedings by a libel for salvage, against both vessel and cargo. This suit was such as to bring the status of the negro slave distinctly to an issue before the court. The Spanish minister claimed the negroes as criminals, and their owners demanded their delivery as runaway property. Pending all these conflicting claims, the blacks were thrown into jail and kept in close confinement. Was ever a more anomalous case? The Spanish government, in claiming an extradition, admitted moral and civil responsibility; the owners,—Spanish citizens,—confounded this claim by demanding possession of mere chattles, and the American libelant proceeded precisely as though he had saved a cargo of cotton.

The President favored the extradition claim, and, so confident was he that the court would sustain it, that he sent a United States man-of-war to New Haven, with orders to take the negroes from the custody of the civil officers, so soon as judgment was rendered, before an appeal could be made by their counsel, and deliver them to the Spanish authorities. This was the first cause of the kind which had ever been tried in the North, it having always been customary to hustle captured negroes to the South, and try them, as another has said, "before a jury of his peers." Mr. Adams at once saw his duty and opportunity, and introduced a resolution inquiring of the President why these men, though charged with no crime, were thus imprisoned. The resolution was lost, though it accomplished its purpose of placing the slavery element of the House again on record. After a prolonged trial the prisoners were liberated. This was the first important judicial victory won by the friends of the negro in the United States.

During the Presidential campaign of 1840 Mr. Giddings was placed in a peculiar and uncomfortable position. Ostensibly a Whig, he was never really a party man in the ordinary sense of the word. His constituency was first anti-slavery then Whig, in sentiment, and he held the same position. He was no fanatic, and recognized the

importance of proper tools with which to do his work; he knew that, in order to do anything substantial in the cause of abolition he must work through a party organization. The Democrats he recognized as hopelessly committed to slavery; in the Whig party he saw the possibility of regeneration. In this he differed from the Abolitionists, who had given up hope of attaining substantial results through Whig agency, and nominated a Presidential ticket of their own. Mr. Giddings recognizing the impossibility of electing this ticket, and the practical necessity of securing at least the lesser evil, supported Harrison, and thus bitterly disappointed the Anti-slavery party. His treatment by Harrison after election was not such as to give him any great personal pleasure in the success of that gentleman.

The greater portion of the Twenty-sixth Congress had passed before Mr. Giddings had opportunity to make any important effort in opposition to slavery. It was during the second session, and on the 9th day of February, 1841, that the calling up of a bill in the committee of the whole, appropriating \$100,000 for the benefit of such Seminole chiefs as would surrender and remove to the West, gave him this opportunity. He then delivered his first elaborate set speech, and one which may be considered worthy to rank with any of his life. He showed that the refusal of the Seminoles to

migrate was accounted for by the fear that the negroes, who had so long constituted a part of their tribe, would be seized by the Creeks; that the desire to capture these negroes was the sole cause of an unrighteous war, and the same desire inspired the measure then introduced. He was called to order under the Atherton gag rule; the chairman pronounced him in order. He was called to order for irrelevancy, but again sustained. The burden of his argument was that, laying aside all question regarding slavery as an institution, the United States could not wage a war in its behalf. He showed how lawless Georgians had crossed the border, seized and enslaved free men. He uttered (and this short quotation will give an idea of the tone of his speech), among others, the following words: "And, sir, our army was put in motion to capture negroes and slaves. Our officers and soldiers became slave catchers, companions of the most degraded class of human beings who inhabit that slave-cursed region. With the assistance of bloodhounds they tracked the flying bondman over hill and dale, through swamp and everglade, until his weary limbs could sustain him no longer. Then they seized him, and, for the bounty of \$20, he was usually delivered over to the first white man who claimed him. Our troops became expert in this business of hunting and enslaving mankind. I doubt whether the Spanish pirates, engaged in

the same employment on the African coast, are more perfect masters of their vocation." Beyond the condemnatory satire and bitter irony suggested by this extract, the speech was a careful and logical argument, based upon a perfect mastery of the subject, replete with apt quotations, thoroughly digested, and entirely conclusive. Mr. Giddings was constantly interrupted; the House was in the wildest confusion. Southern members, and the delegate from Florida arose in turn, ostensibly to answer Mr. Giddings, in reality to cover him, Mr. Adams, Mr. Slade, and the cause they represented, with the vilest abuse, quite unmixed with argument. Thompson, of South Carolina, a Whig, became alarmed for his party, and said that the Whigs were not responsible for the utterances of the obscurest of the obscure individuals in their ranks. Mr. Giddings replied that it was not in the power of Mr. Thompson to assign him a place. It would be quite all he could do to choose his own. That the gentleman knew very well that neither Mr. Giddings' constituents nor his own conscience would allow him to seek redress for insults, after the barbarous fashion of the South, and quoted a saying of a veteran in the service of his country, who, grossly insulted by another for the purpose of evoking a challenge, as he wiped his enemy's spittle from his face, replied: "Could I as easily wipe your blood from my soul, you should not

live an hour." A Southern member, Alford, of Georgia, rushed toward Mr. Giddings, intending to assault him, but was placed under arrest. Downing, of Florida, was filthily abusive, but was not complimented with a word of reply. A day or two afterward he addressed Mr. Giddings in the presence of a number of gentlemen. The latter refused to recognize the bully, and warned him never to speak to him again, save upon official business.

President-elect Harrison was greatly annoyed on account of this speech. When Mr. Giddings called to pay his respects, he was so coldly received as to prevent his repeating the visit, and one of the first acts of Harrison's Presidential career was to reward Thompson's insolence with the Mexican mission. The Twenty-sixth Congress may be thus dismissed.

President Harrison called an extra session of Congress to be convened in May, 1841. Before that time he died and Tyler took the oath of office. Then came an evil day for the Whig party, and the session was rendered remarkable by the attacks made upon the best men of the House, John Quincy Adams and Joshua R. Giddings, in the interest of the slave-holding power. Upon the organization of the House, Wise, of Virginia, moved the adoption of the old rules; Adams moved that the twenty-first rule—the Atherton



gag—be excepted. A warm debate followed, in which Giddings took a prominent part, and, we are told, from that day he was not recognized by a dozen Southern members. Mr. Adams' resolution was laid upon the table.

In January, 1842, Mr. Adams, having presented petition after petition to the House, all directed against slavery, but ingeniously worded to evade the twenty-first rule, presented one from Southern citizens, denouncing him as a monomaniac, and praying for his removal from the committee on foreign relations. From this he sought to defend himself, but the confusion of the House—such as had never before been known—made this almost impossible. For minutes at a time his voice was inaudible. During all this scene Gates, of New York; Slade, of Vermont, and Giddings, of Ohio, were the only members of all the House who stood by and defended him. At last he was fairly drowned out, and comparative order was only restored, when he abandoned his defense and proceeded to present other petitions. Among these was one signed by Benjamin Brewster and forty-six citizens of Haverhill, Massachusetts, praying for the dissolution of the Union “on the ground of the great inequality of benefits enjoyed by the different sections.” This Mr. Adams moved be referred to a select committee, with instructions to report the reasons why its prayer should not be

granted. Marshal, of Kentucky, offered resolutions censuring Adams in the severest manner for presenting such a petition. A motion to lay these on the table was defeated, Adams himself voting against it. Then followed a debate which occupied the House from the 24th of January until the 7th of March. During its continuance Mr. Adams made one of the most remarkable defenses ever known in the House, and procured the rejection of Marshal's resolution by a vote of one hundred and six to ninety-three. During this debate Adams had spoken for three days in terrible arraignment of slavery, when he was asked by a Southern member, how long it would be before he would conclude. He answered: "I think I may finish in about *ninety days*." Such was his spirit. Yet how nearly alone he stood, when a call for a meeting of Whigs to devise means for his defense brought only eight men to Mr. Giddings' room!

Three weeks after this victory, Mr. Giddings presented a petition from citizens of Austinburg, Ohio, praying for an amicable division of the Union, separating the free from the slave States. He made the same motion for its disposal which Mr. Adams had made in the case of the Haverhill petition. The House refused to receive the petition, declaring it disrespectful, and a futile attempt was made to secure a declaration that, thereafter, the presentation of such a petition should

*ipso facto* constitute such an act of disrespect as to subject the member making it to censure. So the matter dropped.

It seemed, however, that Mr. Giddings was not to escape the censure of the House for a length of time. During the winter of 1842 there came up again a familiar question of international law between Great Britain and the United States. The brig *Creole* sailed from Hampton roads for New Orleans, with a cargo of slaves; these rose upon the crew, compelled the vessel to be sailed to Nassau, and landed, free men. Mr. Webster made the paradoxical demand of England, that the negroes be delivered up "as mutineers and murderers, *and the recognized property of citizens of the United States.*" This Great Britain refused to do, holding that property in human beings was not recognized in international law, and that the negroes were not murderers, as they were justified in killing their captors. Mr. Giddings arose in his place on the 21st of March and presented a series of resolutions which declared, in effect: that prior to the adoption of the Constitution the several States had complete power over slavery within their own borders, and surrendered none of it to the Federal Government by the adoption of the Constitution; that they did surrender to the General Government all power on the high seas; that slavery, being an abridgement of human rights,

existed by force of municipal law, and must hence be confined to the jurisdiction of the State which created it; that a ship, when it leaves the waters of a State and enters upon the high seas, ceases to be under the laws of that State, but is, with the persons on board, under the laws of the United States; that when the *Creole* left the jurisdiction of Virginia, the slave laws of that State ceased to be of force over the persons aboard; that when such persons asserted their personal rights, they violated no law of the United States, and all attempts to re-enslave them were unwarranted by the Constitution or law of the United States, and incompatible with National honor; that all attempts to place the coast slave trade under the protection of the Government were subversive of the rights of the people of the free States, injurious to their feelings, unauthorized by the Constitution, and prejudicial to the National character.

The effect of the presentation of these resolutions was almost beyond our appreciation at this day. No blow so boldly and fearlessly directed at slavery had ever been struck in Congress; no man had ever dared to take so great a risk of political ruin and bodily injury. Those were the most fiery days of the slave domination. Mr. Giddings had scarcely ceased to speak, before a Southern member approached the aisle where he was standing and violently attempted to push

him out of it. As Mr. Giddings turned around to see who his assailant was, the latter passed close by him, with his right hand inside his vest, apparently taking hold of his bowie knife. He came back within four feet of Mr. Giddings, and placed himself in a menacing attitude directly in front of him. Mr. Giddings inquired: "Did you push me?" looking him directly in the eye. "I did," was the reply. "Intentionally?" asked Mr. Giddings. "Yes." "For the purpose of insult?" demanded Mr. Giddings. "Yes," was again the answer. "Well, sir," replied Mr. Giddings, "we are in the habit of leaving those men who wantonly insult others, to the contempt of public opinion." By this time the friends of the member interfered, and led him from the hall.

Black, of Georgia, approaching with a cane raised to strike, challenged a repetition of one expression made by Mr. Giddings; his request was promptly and emphatically complied with, when considerate friends removed him from the hall; Dawson, of Georgia, arose and shouted, "D——n him, I'll shoot him," but made no movement to carry his threat into effect. The previous question was moved; a motion to lay the resolutions upon the table was made and lost. Holmes, of South Carolina, began a speech with the words: "Certain topics, like certain places, are sacred:

'Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.'"—

After this promising beginning he was cut off by a reminder that the previous question had been moved. The previous question was about to come to a vote. Mr. Everett, of Vermont, expressed "his utter abhorrence of the fire-brand course of the gentleman from Ohio." Several requests to be excused from voting were made on the ground that the subject was of too grave importance to be disposed of so summarily. Mr. Caleb Cushing viewed the resolutions as "a British argument, and an approximation to a treasonable view of the subject." Mr. Giddings declared that he had distinctly stated that the resolutions were important and that he merely desired to lay them before the House, and rather than have so hasty a vote taken upon the subject he would withdraw them.

But the sensitive honor of the slavocrats was too keenly hurt by the plain language of the resolutions to permit of dropping the matter at such a stage. Mr. Botts, of Virginia, asked and obtained leave to offer a resolution, saying that, as he intended to move the previous question upon its adoption, he would refrain from making any remarks. He then presented the following preamble and resolutions:

"WHEREAS, The Hon. Joshua R. Giddings, the member from the Sixteenth Congressional District of the State of Ohio, has this day presented to the House a series of resolutions touching the most

important interests connected with a large portion of the Union, now a subject of negotiation between the United States and Great Britain of the most delicate nature, the result of which may eventually involve those nations, and perhaps the whole civilized world, in war; and,

“WHEREAS, It is the duty of every good citizen, and particularly the duty of every selected agent and representative of the people, to discountenance all efforts to create excitement, disaffection, and division among the people of the United States; and,

“WHEREAS, Mutiny and murder are in the said series of resolutions justified and approved in terms shocking to all sense of law, order, and humanity, the tendency of all which requires from this House an immediate and unequivocal expression of its sentiments; therefore,

“*Resolved*, That this House dissents from, and emphatically condemns the propositions contained in the said resolution, which favorably prejudice and excuse an act of unquestionable homicide; justify and defend, without a denial of the alleged facts, parties charged with cold-blooded murder; instigate, by a pledge of legislative protection and indemnity, crimes which may involve a large portion of our common country in rapine and massacre, and the whole of it in tumult, affliction, and disgrace; wantonly interfere with the legitimate

proceedings of another branch of the Government and its guardianship of the Nation's rights and honor; and invite to treasonable leagues those who may be disposed to levy war against the United States, holding out promises of adhering to their enemies, and giving them aid and comfort.

“*Resolved*, That this House holds the conduct of the said member as altogether unwarranted and unwarrantable, and deserving the severe condemnation of the people of this country, and of this body in particular.”

Mr. Botts moved a suspension of the rules and failed to obtain it, the vote being 128 to 68. Ohio being regularly in order, Mr. Weller, of that State, offered Mr. Botts' resolution and moved the previous question, in order to cut off debate.

The speaker ruled that Mr. Giddings was entitled as a matter of privilege to make his defense at once, but the House reversed the ruling and the previous question was seconded. Mr. Giddings desired a postponement for two weeks, to permit of his preparing a defense; this was refused. He was offered the privilege of a defense upon condition of making it then and there, but with great dignity refused to bargain for his constitutional rights. At last there appeared to be a unanimous voice of the House in favor of hearing the defense, and, urged by his friends, Mr. Giddings said:



“Mr. Speaker, I stand before the House in a peculiar position ——,” when Mr. Cooper, of Georgia, interposed an objection to his being heard. He then took his seat, and, although the objection was immediately withdrawn, refused to resume. The resolution of censure was then adopted by a vote of 125 to 69.

On the same day Mr. Giddings sent to the National Intelligencer the following communication :

To the reporter of the Intelligencer :

When I rose so often during the confusion of the proceedings of the House this day, and was so often called to order, the last time by Mr. Cooper, of Georgia, I had written, and desired to state to the House, what follows :

“Mr. Speaker:—I stand before the House in a peculiar situation. It is proposed to pass a vote of censure upon me, substantially for the reason that I differ in opinion from the majority of the members. The vote is about to be taken without giving me time to be heard. It would be idle for me to say that I am ignorant of the disposition of the majority to pass the resolution. I have been violently assailed in a personal manner, but have had no opportunity of being heard in reply. I do not now stand here to ask any favor or to crave any mercy at the hands of the members. But, in the name of an insulted constituency,—in behalf

of one of the sovereign States of the Union, in behalf of these States and the Federal Constitution—I demand a hearing, agreeably to the rights guaranteed to me, and in the ordinary mode of proceeding. I accept of no other privilege. I will receive no other courtesy.”

The happiness of the advocates of slavery, in and out of Congress, already great at the humiliation of their fearless enemy, was increased by his resignation, which followed his censure as a matter of course. He returned to Ohio, and was received, not as a punished wrong-doer, but as a champion who had maintained his cause in the lists against a multitude of opponents, and deserved the praise, the encouragement, and the vindication of his constituents. At every town through which he passed on his homeward way—at Cleveland, Painesville, Ashtabula, Jefferson, Chardon,—he met an ovation. Resolution after resolution was passed by various societies throughout the land, and by mass meetings called for the purpose of expressing approval of his course and condemnation of his censure, and forwarded to the House. Governor Corwin named the 26th day of April as the time of holding a special election to fill the vacancy which the resignation had created. The result was a foregone conclusion. Though it was a special election and no one doubted the return of Mr. Giddings, his course had excited so great enthusi-

asm as to secure for him a majority of about three thousand and five hundred, quite unprecedented in such a case.

This majority, large as it was, would have been greater but for a very characteristic trick played by the Democrats of the district. They allowed it to be understood, until but a very few days before the election, that no opposition would be made to the return of the candidate. Then having previously made a careful and very quiet canvass, they placed a candidate in nomination, hoping to take the Whigs by surprise and secure a victory. On the morning of the day of election Mr. Weller, the same doughface who offered in the House the resolutions of censure prepared by his master, Mr. Botts, published and circulated throughout the Sixteenth district an attack upon Mr. Giddings, bitter and malignant as it was untruthful. With the fairness shown in the matter of the censure, Mr. Weller published this communication too late to permit of answer or denial. As a result of all their planning, the Democrats had the satisfaction of adding to themselves the mortification of defeat to the sting of rebuke. The effort to crush the intrepid Ohioan had failed, and not only failed, but had reacted upon its projectors; Giddings, coming back with all the prestige of an endorsement, was a man of National repute and weight. The blind fury of the South

had sent home, bearing the stigma of a censure, the Congressman from a rural Ohio district. In five weeks its exultation was changed to humiliation, by his return reinforced, strengthened, doubly formidable. On Thursday, May 5, 1842, he took the oath; seventeen years later, speaking before the New York anti-slavery society, in New York City, he said:

“When I returned to that hall and marched up to the altar, again to take the oath to maintain the Constitution of the country, I say to you, in the presence of Heaven, that I meant what I said. If I have failed to maintain that Constitution may God forgive me, for, if I have failed, it has been through my want of intelligence and not from any intention on my part. As I looked around upon those who, five weeks before had gazed upon me with such arrogance, and attempted to look into their faces, I could not catch the eye, in that vast hall, of one of them who could look me in the face. Then I felt the power of truth; I felt the power of him, who, clothed in its panoply, maintains those doctrines of freedom which lie so near to every human heart.”

Thus ended one of the most dark and disgraceful chapters in the history of American legislation. Historians of the Southern inclining do not relish the subject. The journal of the House was toned down for the sake of decorum, and

Benton, in those remarkable historical productions, the Condensed Debates of the Thirty Years in Congress, though he devoted space to the *Crook* case, forgot to mention that Giddings was ever censured, ever resigned, or was ever returned after such resignation.

The tone of the public press of the North, representing whatever party, was almost uniformly condemnatory of the high-handed course taken by the House. A large section was positive in its approval of Mr. Giddings' course; a lesser one, while affecting to doubt the wisdom of his action, as tending to inflame the South and affect diplomatic negotiations, admitted his honesty and strongly disapproved of the censure. Even the Democratic press, when not servilely partisan, recognized and admitted the fact that the House had by its action exceeded the authority of the Constitution and far transcended all precedent. To the last-named class belonged the New York Evening Post, and from its editorial comments upon the matter the following portion may well be extracted:

“In censuring Mr. Giddings for the doctrines laid down in his resolutions the House has overstepped its powers. Mr. Giddings is not responsible to them for any opinions he may entertain or avow; nor have they the right to reprimand him for not agreeing with them. They have no

such right either derived from the Constitution or from the necessity of the case. They are not in any sense his masters, nor is he bound to submit his views to their censorship before he declares them. He is one of the representatives of a Northern State, and, speaking in the name of his constituents, he has a right to declare openly their views on any question of public policy, without being answerable to any one but them, and without the hazard of any fear of punishment, except their disapprobation. Any attempt to inflict upon him a mark of disgrace for the opinions he professes, is an attack not only upon the liberty of speech, but upon the rights of his constituents,—an invasion of the sovereignty of the State which he represents.

“Mr. Giddings does well in resigning and appealing to his constituents. We hope that they will send him back by a unanimous vote. If we lived among them, we would lay aside all party preferences to vindicate the rights which have been so arbitrarily wrested from their representative.”

It remained for the utterly subservient Northern papers and for the Southern papers at large to throw to the winds all fairness, truth and common sense, and exult in the censure and resignation; to assail Mr. Giddings and his defenders with abuse which no other vocabulary nearer than

Billingsgate would render possible, and, finally, to subside into a mortified silence under the rebuke of his endorsement and re-election.

## VI.

Coming again to Washington—thus reinforced and approved—more than this, affirmatively directed by his constituents to continue his war against slavery and the slave power, and to represent the resolutions which had evoked his censure—Mr. Giddings was in a position to do more effective work than ever before. He came, free from the suspicion of being a demagogue; he could speak as one having authority—the chosen and approved mouthpiece of ninety thousand citizens. Then, too, the agitation of the sluggish pool of Northern sentiment had tended to crystallization, and while the definite and aggressive anti-slavery opinion was yet that of a minority, it was definite and aggressive as never before. So there was an unquestioned gain.

The second session of the Twenty-seventh Congress closed in August, 1842. Up to that time Giddings was assiduous in his efforts to carry out the will of his constituents, by again introducing the then noted resolutions. But the majority, like



the great cardinal, finding the lion's skin too short pieced it out with that of the fox. Having failed to crush, as intended, the herald of everlasting truth and justice, they attempted by all manner of legislative arts and devices to prevent him from carrying out his intentions. Resolution days were systematically devoted to other purposes; the call of States, which would have given him an opportunity, never came. Thus he was eventually compelled to change his tactics, and when, on the 4th day of June, 1842, a proposition to reduce the army, embraced in a bill before the House, was opposed on the ground that war might grow out of the *Creole* transaction, he arose in support of the bill, made a complete defense of himself, arraigned the majority and the administration, and so clearly exposed the legal and constitutional fallacies of the slave holding evangelists that the negotiation with England, regarding the *Creole* damages, was dropped and never renewed. This speech, his last of importance during that session, was, in all respects—for clearness of statement, clearness of argument, and eloquence—one of the most notable of his many efforts upon the floor of the House. A short extract may profitably be transferred to these pages:

“The gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Cushing) asserts that ‘we have a question of honor with the British government, growing out

of the *Creole* question,' and therefore objects to a reduction of the army. I entertain a different opinion. I deny that this Government either has, or can, constitutionally have anything to do with this transaction. The *Creole* was engaged in the atrocious employment of importing slaves and we cannot honorably lend any encouragement or support to 'that execrable commerce in human flesh.' Every principle of morality, of National honor, forbids that we should lend any aid or assistance to those engaged in traffic in the bodies of men, women, and children. If we prostitute our influence in behalf of persons thus engaged, we shall dishonor ourselves and the people whom we represent. Sir, I would not retain a single soldier in service to maintain this slave trade; on the contrary, I should rejoice if every slave shipped from our slave breeding States could regain his liberty, either by the strength of his own arms, or by landing on some British island. . . . But the honorable Secretary of State, speaking of these people, in his letter to our Minister, at London, refers to them as guilty of mutiny and murder. Had he made demand for them as murderers, or mutineers, the British government would, in all probability, have surrendered them, in order that they might suffer the penalty attached to those crimes, under our laws. But he has made no such demand. He merely demands payment, in dol-

lars and cents, for their blood and bones, their muscles and sinews. His zeal and anxiety are in behalf of the slave holders, not of justice; he demands pay, not punishment, and the question very naturally arises: Why did that officer attempt to stigmatize those people as guilty of mutiny and murder? . . . . These persons had suffered the hardest of slavery under the laws of Virginia; while in that State, the whole power of the Commonwealth had been arrayed against them, to hold them in bondage. At length their owners carried them beyond the jurisdiction of these slave laws. They were upon the high seas subject only to the laws of Congress. These piratical dealers held them in subjection, without law, and in violation of justice and the dictates of humanity. In the spirit and dignity of their manhood, they rose and asserted the rights with which the God of nature had endowed them. The slave holder thrust himself between them and their freedom, and attempted to disrobe them of the liberty which God had given them, and to subject them to his will. They defended their lives and their liberty; they slew him, for which you and I and all mankind honor them. We applaud their heroism; the whole civilized world will say they did right. Not a slave holder present will say they did wrong. Would the honorable Secretary in their situation have done less? Would he, with a craven heart

and a dastardly soul, have quietly submitted to be carried to the barracoons of New Orleans, and sold like a beast of burthen? If so, he would not have deserved the name of man. They possessed no moral right to surrender the liberty of themselves and offspring for all coming time; to doom their descendants forever to sighs, and chains, and tears, and suffering. . . . Sir, the doctrines advanced by the Secretary of State are unworthy of the reputation he sustains and the position he holds. They are in conflict with the spirit of the age in which we live, and of the religion we profess; they are opposed to the Constitution, and to the humane promptings of our nature; they are hostile to the public sentiment, and to the interest, of the people. The people love freedom; they admire justice; but they hate oppression, and detest crime."

During the recess which followed the close of the session, extending from August until December, 1842, Mr. Giddings was far from idle. He busied himself with the preparation of that series of political tracts written by him, and published over the signature "Pacificus," which at that time made so great a stir both among the supporters and opponents of slavery. It seems strange to-day to think that any considerable sensation could have been created by the promulgation of the opinions conveyed in these tracts, for they have

now earned such universal recognition as to seem almost axiomatic; then, however, they were sufficiently radical. Riddle has epitomized their principal arguments, as follows:

“The dominant ideas were those of the *Creole* resolutions. Slavery—a wrong—could only exist by virtue of positive law, and was wholly within the power and control of the State enacting the law. That the people of the free States were in no way responsible for slavery in the slave States, either to uphold or destroy. Freedom was their institution; as they were not responsible for slavery in the States, so they must be held free from the cost and infamy of it. That the Federal Government could no more abolish one than the other within the States; that everywhere outside the States, where their laws could not go, the authority of the Federal Government was supreme, and that it must be used to secure the ends and promote the objects of its creation, as set forth in the Constitution.”

These papers were widely read and copied, evoked much discussion in private circles and in the public prints, drew forth vigorous set answers, and, when all was done, provided, in place of the vague sense of wrong and injustice which had been common to thousands in the North, a definite declaration of principles,—a creed which was almost universally accepted by those of that

inclining. It must be remembered that the Abolitionists were a very small, and not a practical, element in the slavery contest at that time; in other words, that the unquestioned constitutional obstacles, and the countless practical difficulties, in the way of abolition had, in 1842, caused the majority of the friends of the negro to be for the time content with repressive measures. They would have welcomed very gladly any substantial chance for abolition; they looked for the day, as devout Jews look for a corporeal return to Jerusalem, when, by purchase or at the expiration of a certain long and fixed period, slavery might be forever at an end in the United States, but the fruition of that hope could only come in the dim future. As it was, the best of them were prepared to accept Mr. Giddings' statement of principles. The ultra Abolitionists were somewhat dissatisfied that it did not go further; the Northern Whigs, while individually assenting to its doctrines, were not yet prepared, as an organization, to commit themselves to anything so radical. Hence the anti-slavery cause had not yet a party of strength and significance behind it—only the small but earnest band of men calling themselves the Liberty party, but these more united and determined than ever before.

Giddings, at the time of his censure, was chairman of the important Committee on Claims; upon

his resignation, the place was filled, according to custom, for the remainder of the session. Hence, upon the assembling of the third session of the XXVIIth Congress, White, of Kentucky, then Speaker, who had opposed and condemned the censure, promptly replaced Giddings at the head of his committee, against the protest of Southerners of both parties. The original rule of the House was that each committee should choose its own chairman, but the usage which now controls, that the person first named by the Speaker in appointing the committee should be its chairman, was then well recognized and in force. A combination was made by the members of the committee hostile to Mr. Giddings to compass his removal by action of the committee. Giddings was warned and advised to resign, but declined so to do, and the plot against him failed.

The session was notable for some of the strongest work ever done by Mr. Giddings for the obstruction and defeat of slavery legislation. The first occasion was upon the presentation of a bill, indemnifying masters for slaves lost in Florida. Giddings opposed the measure with all the resources which his great knowledge of the subject, his earnest persuasion of the iniquity of the measure, and his ability as a debater, gave him. So close and exciting was the contest that it called to his feet the "Old Man Eloquent," Adams, whose



voice was then but rarely heard in the hall. His arguments and those of Mr. Giddings were sufficient to defeat the bill, of which the passage had been deemed a foregone conclusion.

The second case was one in which Mr. Giddings was obliged to use one of the devices of the professional legislator—a very unusual thing for him. During the administration of Jackson, Great Britain had been induced to pay ninety-five thousand dollars for the loss of slaves freed by being wrecked on British soil. This matter seems to have been a little private enterprise of Old Hickory and Van Buren, his friend and heir-at-law. The indemnity came directly into the hands of the former, and was by him largely distributed among the claimants whom he deemed entitled to it. The remainder passed to Van Buren, and the payments made during his administration reduced the balance to the insignificant sum of four thousand dollars. This amount was transferred by Van Buren to the Secretary of the Treasury, and a receipt was given by that officer. In 1843 a bill was introduced ordering the Secretary of the Treasury to pay from this fund the claims of certain persons, then tardily presented, which he had refused to recognize without the explicit direction of Congress. This bill Giddings resolved to oppose, not that he had any hope of defeating it, or any great desire to prevent the payment of so



insignificant a sum, but because he wished to make a formal protest against the recognition by Congress, at so late a day, of an iniquitous transaction in which it had taken no early part. Giddings explained to Stanley, one of the promoters of the measure, what was his view of the case, and said that he would not oppose a bill to return the money to the Executive, thus restoring the matter to its original status. Stanley expressed himself satisfied. A bill in accordance with Giddings' suggestion was substituted and passed, but, when the matter reached the Senate, was amended by striking out the bill as passed by the House, and substituting the original and objectionable one. When the bill as amended was returned to the House, Stanley presented it, and demanded the previous question, to cut off debate. This was evidently a gross breach of faith, and justified extreme measures on the part of Giddings. The latter voted for the bill, when it was put upon its passage, and immediately moved a reconsideration, explaining, at the same time, that his affirmative vote had been given purely for the purpose of securing an opportunity to be heard in opposition, of which an attempt had been made to defraud him. Then he followed with a splendidly simple but convincing argument in support of his position. It was a futile effort, but so brave a one as to com-

mand admiration and to excuse the quotation of a portion :

“We are called on to interpose our legislative powers in aid of certain individuals of this city and of South Carolina who, in 1831, entered into a commercial speculation in the bodies of men, women, and children. Many of them were born here under our laws, and were entitled by every principle of humanity to our protection. Here, sir, in view of this hall, under the shadow of the ‘star spangled banner’ which floats over this edifice, consecrated to freedom, to the maintenance of the undying truth that ‘governments are instituted to secure all men in the enjoyment of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,’ these hucksters in human flesh critically examined the bodies and limbs, and judged of the age, the qualities, and the marketable value of fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, and children. I doubt whether any slave market in Africa was ever attended by more expert dealers in human chattels, than was the market of this city, which profanes the name of Washington. But, sir, their victims were born and bred under our laws for the very purpose ; this city and the surrounding country have been familiar to them from their earliest recollection ; here were the scenes of their childhood, to which they had become attached ; here they had formed their associations ; in our churches they had listened to

the preaching of the gospel, and there they had been admitted to church fellowship; there they had partaken of the holy communion as members of our various Christian denominations. Such were the people whose bodies were made merchandise under our laws. Such were the people purchased by these slave dealers, who now ask us to aid them in carrying out these speculations in the bodies of Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, and Episcopalians. . . . But the bill goes farther, and directs the treasurer to pay to the owner of each slave 'such sum as he is entitled to receive.' By this form of expression, I suppose it was intended to give to each the value of the person claimed. How will you estimate the value of a man? Does it depend upon his complexion? for, sir, there are all grades of color in this market; or which is deemed the more valuable, black or white, or a mixture of both? Or, shall the officer be governed by the genealogy of the slave in estimating his value? If he have descended in the paternal line from one of the best families in the "Old Dominion," shall he be deemed of greater value than though he were of pure African blood? Does such mixture improve or deteriorate a man? These, sir, are all of them 'delicate questions,' which I should like to hear answered by some of the friends of the bill. . . . Sir, place the subject in whatever attitude you please, throw

around it whatever sophistry the human intellect is capable of calling into exercise, yet the disgusting fact will stand portrayed to the world in coming time, that, in the year 1843, this American Congress sat gravely legislating in aid of this traffic in human flesh. Let it go upon record; let the archives of this body bear to coming generations, the proof that two hundred and forty-two American statesmen were, on this day, engaged in granting relief and encouragement to persons engaged in that execrable commerce, which Mr. Jefferson declared had 'rendered us the scoff of infidel nations.' But let not my name be found among its advocates. Let not my descendants in future years be called to blush for their ancestor, in reading the record of this day's proceeding. Sooner, far sooner, would I have it erased from the records of this House; yea, sooner would I have it blotted from existence than see it placed on record in favor of the bill before us."

This long extract is given for the reason that it embodies, in comparatively small compass, several specimens of the style of Mr. Giddings as a debater. It would be interesting and profitable, were it possible, to multiply examples, but, with some very slight exceptions, those already given must suffice to place Mr. Giddings before the reader as he stood in the House, week after week, and year after year, while infants grew to be

men, parties changed, and principles were re-cast, ever clinging to his one resolve, and, through evil and good report alike, letting fall upon the seemingly solid rock of sin and prejudice, the drops of appeal, of logic, and of argument, which did so much to make the way for the great reform of the future. At the conclusion of the speech, Black, a half-civilized member from Georgia, attacked Mr. Giddings in one of the most indecent harangues ever heard upon the floor of the House; it contained no pretense at argument,—only scurrility, profanity, and abuse. At the conclusion of the tirade Mr. Giddings said: “I am not sent here by my constituents to notice the low, vulgar, and indecent attacks of which this out-pouring is a fair example,” and turned away. Then Dawson, a drunken bully from Louisiana, who had once before deliberately insulted the Ohio Congressman, came down the aisle, as Mr. Giddings, with his face turned away, was conversing with Mr. Wise, of Virginia, and pushed the former rudely, at the same time halting, with his hand on the hilt of his knife, to await an answer. Mr. Giddings, turning to Dawson, said: “Was that intended as an insult to me?” “It was,” answered Dawson, at the same time muttering a threat to “Kill the d——d Abolitionist.” Then Mr. Giddings, addressing the chair, said: “He speaks of chastisement and personal violence.

Now, sir, I attack no man; I am not a bully, but that I can and will defend myself, if occasion requires, shall be demonstrated when any of these threats shall be attempted to be carried into execution." Mr. Giddings, a very powerful man, was capable, with a fair use of Nature's weapons, of demolishing half a dozen Dawsons and Blacks, and seeing him determined, friends of the gentlemen considerably interposed, and took them beyond harm's reach.

Before the close of the Twenty-seventh Congress, the scheme for the annexation of Texas was already formed, and its entire import, the deep laid plan for the perpetuity of slavery, by a southern extension of the United States, looking as far as Mexico and Cuba, fully recognized. At the very close of the Twenty-seventh Congress, under date of March 3, 1843, was promulgated the famous address of the twenty members of Congress, to "The People of the Free States of the Union," exposing the annexation scheme in its true light, and calling for the support of the people in an effort to defeat it. Of the twenty names signed to this address, the first were those of John Q. Adams, Seth M. Gates, William Slade, William B. Calhoun, and Joshua R. Giddings. The paper was drawn by Mr. Gates, and was circulated everywhere throughout the North, prac-

tically opening the bitter contest on the subject which marked the next Congress.

The Twenty-eighth Congress, which met at Washington, in December, 1843, found Giddings with greater responsibilities and better fitness to sustain them than ever before. Adams, it is true, was yet in his place, but the labor of years had made him an infirm old man, still well fitted to give counsel, but little able to lead in a prolonged and violent parliamentary struggle; Slade and Gates, his old-time allies, had retired, and he was the only speaking member left to represent the anti-slavery cause. The contest, if somewhat more decorous than that of his earlier service, was more intense and bitter. At the outset of the session Mr. Adams reopened his old battle against the denial of the right of petition, embodied and enforced in the rule of the House, commonly known as the Atherton gag rule. For two weeks this gallant veteran, of seventy-six years, held his place in an exceptionally bitter and intense debate, with all his old quickness and effectiveness; his mind lacked nothing of power to carry the contest to the end against this old wrong, which he so anxiously desired to see righted before he died, but, at the end of those two weeks, bodily fatigue and weakness compelled him to give over to Mr. Giddings his own place in the battle. The latter carried the contest to a successful issue, following Mr. Adams'



points so closely that even a hostile majority feared to insist upon retaining upon the books so iniquitous a rule. The speech made by Mr. Giddings on the 14th of February, 1844, which practically closed the debate on his side, was, as many think, the finest constitutional argument ever made by him.

So long as Giddings had been comparatively insignificant, his unpopularity in Washington society, and in the House in particular, had only extended to those persons actually threatened or affected by his efforts; he was but one of a large body, and bore only his share of odium. By 1844 he had risen to a place of unquestionable leadership—not of a party, but of a sentiment. He was the embodiment of hope to the anti-slavery people of the North; the incarnation of all that was contemptible to the slave holding element, and to the Northern doughfaces. The Whig party was not gifted with prevision, and did not recognize how inevitable was a contest which should rest fairly upon the slavery issue. Its leaders, whatever their private feelings and belief on the subject of slavery, dreaded an agitation which might injure them in the Presidential campaign, then approaching. They confounded the instrument with the power which wielded it, and, not recognizing that Giddings was but a medium for the manifestation of the unchangeable laws of justice,—that eternal truth was



forcing itself to a hearing from his lips,—they condemned and avoided him as a marplot and a demagogue. In such an anomalous position was he placed; admittedly the most prominent figure in the House of Representatives, he was still denied his old place, at the head of the Committee on Claims, and only recognized by an appointment far down in the membership of the Committee on Revolutionary Pensions; a kindly, social, and sympathetic man, he was ignored in society, save that of the little knot of those who thought as he did. With power and influence to oppose, and sometimes overrule, a legislative majority, the doors of Washington homes were closed against him, public prints maligned him, and men whom he had known for years, passed him in the lobbies, and on the street, without recognition. All this, so far from weakening his allegiance to his own conscience, seemed to nerve him for the greater struggles that were before him. Indeed, those were dark and threatening days for the Republic, and there was need of men of such heroic mold as his. The dark plots which resulted in the theft of Texas, and the iniquitous war with Mexico, were even then laid; before, though yet unsuspected, were the abrogation of the Missouri Compromise, the Lecompton outrage, presenting the spectacle of a Government waging war against its own people, to force slavery upon them against

their will; then the California and Oregon troubles, and, finally, secession and war.

The first of these succeeding and cumulative dangers was at hand. Texas was already slave territory, but English philanthropists had long been endeavoring to secure the abolition of slavery within its limits. In 1843 these efforts had taken more definite form than ever before. The South became alarmed, and President Tyler began a correspondence with the Texan authorities, looking to the annexation of the vast territory under their control. The arguments soberly advanced in favor of such a measure, were that the existence of a free and independent territory, contiguous to our Southern borders, would endanger the existence of slavery in the United States, while the possession of Texas would give an outlet for the surplus slave population. The second reason explains the whole matter: the South had determined to secure Texas, and as much additional territory to the southward as possible; colonize it, establish slavery upon a firm basis, eventually obtain the admission of slave States to be carved out of the new territory, and, thus offsetting the westward development upon free soil, perpetuate the political control of the Nation by the South. This was the plan. Southern men had long been urging, in Congress and through the press, the desirability of such an acquisition; an annexation propaganda had been

quietly at work upon the interest of the South, and the cupidity and credulity of the North. The address of the twenty Congressmen was the first warning on the subject. The second came on the 21st of May, 1844, when, the naval appropriation bill being under discussion in committee of the whole, and a treaty of annexation being already framed and agreed upon, before the Senate, Mr. Giddings took advantage of the latitude of debate allowed under the circumstances, and embodied in a speech, the first protest ever made in Congress against this contemplated wrong, which the whole civilized world has since recognized and united in condemning. To do this duty required an amount of courage,—personal and moral,—difficult for us, in these more settled days of the Republic, to appreciate. It was done, and well done. Mr. Giddings was uncompromising. He showed how Texas was in revolt against Mexico, a friendly power, by reason of Mexico's effort to abolish Texan slavery; he looked for a motive for the desire of Texas for annexation, and found it to exist in the dual fact that she had a war with Mexico, which she desired us to fight, and a debt of ten millions of dollars, which she wished us to pay. He pointed out the facts that the United States was called upon to assume this war, and pay this sum for the avowed protection of an institution which could not be constitutionally recognized, an institution hateful to the

North; that the North would be compelled to pay its share of the cost, not only without benefit, but to its positive disadvantage; and tested the justice of the measure, by reversing the proposition, and asking how the South would view a project, emanating from the North, which contemplated annexing Texas at a large cost, that her slaves might be set free, and slavery weakened in the South. He said, further, "We have passed more than half a century under our present Constitution, and now the President assumes to himself the power of making slavery a National instead of a State institution, and of extending the power and influence of the Federal Government to its support. He has brought our army into the field, in hostile attitude toward a friendly power, with whom we are on terms of perfect amity, and has sent a fleet to insult and provoke that government to hostilities. He has, by his secret orders, without the consent of the people of the Nation or their representatives, and without deigning even to consult his constitutional advisers, suddenly plunged us into a war for the openly avowed object and purpose of extending and perpetuating slavery. These profligate acts, these usurpations of power, these violations of the Constitution, can be characterized by no term of milder signification than *treason*, *treason* against the rights of this people, *treason* against the Constitution, *treason* against humanity

itself. I feel it my duty to declare it such in the presence of this House and of the country. . . .

. . . . The gentleman from Alabama said, rather sneeringly, I thought, that there is a class of public men who deny the constitutional power of the Federal Government to annex Texas to this Union. He then went on to say that such were the views of the Abolitionists, and that their candidate for President (James G. Birney) had started this doctrine. Now I beg leave to differ with the gentleman, as to the authorship of this doctrine. It had been put forth long before Mr. Birney's letter was written. It was put forth by a greater abolitionist than Mr. Birney—by a man whom I have always regarded as a far greater man, and for whose opinions I have, from my youth up, been taught to pay the highest respect. (Cries: 'Who is it? Who is it?') He was the author of the first abolition tract ever published in the United States, and, in my opinion, the best ever put forth. (Cries, 'Name him!') I borrowed my own abolition sentiments from his writings; I have cherished them, and shall continue to do so, from respect to his memory, if from no other motive. His name was Thomas Jefferson, and his abolition tract was called the Declaration of Independence."

This speech being made in committee of the whole, and not to any question, was merely an expression. It was purely impromptu; Mr. Gid-

dings when the sitting began, had no idea of speaking and he used neither note nor reference. As an example of *ex tempore* oratory it bears, as a whole, favorable comparison with any ever delivered in the House. There may have been more brilliant and eloquent speeches,—few clearer, more forcible or better calculated to impress any person open to conviction.

Of the Texas project and Mr. Giddings' connection with it, more hereafter. The Presidential campaign was at hand. Mr. Giddings was again placed in an embarrassing position, for, while his sympathy was all with the Liberty party, he had no faith in their ability, at the stage of affairs then existing, to accomplish results; his supreme desire was to bring something practical to pass, and he believed that that result could only be accomplished through the agency of one or the other of the existing parties, until something should happen to cause a re-array of forces. The Democrats were irretrievably committed to the cause of slavery; the Whigs had never been organically identified with the anti-slavery cause, but their attitude had been dictated more by policy than by sentiment. A large proportion of the Northern men included within the Whig lines were, theoretically at least, opposed to slavery. Mr. Giddings did not despair of the conversion of the Whig party, especially if the Texas scheme should result in the forma-

tion of a distinct issue. Hence, in the campaign of 1844, he opposed Polk because he hated the Democratic party; he opposed Birney because he saw no prospect of electing him; he favored and supported Clay, because, in a Whig success, he thought existed the best practical chance for the cause to which he was devoted. Never did he come so near sacrificing the faith and affection of his constituents. The anti-slavery spirit was stronger in the Western Reserve, than in any other territory, of equal extent, in the United States. The young Whigs had gone, almost to a man, into the Liberty party. Their blood was hotter and their reason not so clear as that of Giddings. They blamed him for supporting Clay, as did the Birney organs the country over, and he was bitterly abused by those who had always been his warmest friends and admirers. He had not, however, faced that early "Solid South" for years, to be much affected by abuse or misrepresentation. Election came. Every school boy now knows the result. Polk was elected, Clay defeated, and Birney buried. Clay beat himself by indiscreet utterances, and his friends were loud in mourning that it was so; but, in looking back at the campaign from the standpoint of to-day, it seems as though Polk's election was indeed the most fortunate possible result. We now see that there was even then an irrepressible conflict between



North and South; that war was foreordained; that the poison of slavery was in the Nation's blood, and something must come to bring it out or the country was doomed. Polk took his seat; Texas was annexed, the Mexican war came; the Whigs were routed, the Republican party was formed; slavery took the sword and slavery perished by the sword. So close was the sequence of events. It all must have come in the end, but Polk, perhaps, hastened that end by more than one decade.

One feature of Mr. Giddings' attitude in this campaign, was peculiarly characteristic of the man. His support of Mr. Clay he required to be based upon knowledge,—the knowledge that Clay was clearly committed to opposition to the Texas annexation scheme, and as clearly an advocate of the theory that slavery was purely a State institution. Clay wrote an open letter on the annexation question, which was quite satisfactory to Giddings and the Ohio Whigs, but he was unwise enough to follow it with another, which seemed on the surface to radically modify the matter. Giddings wrote him in regard to the subject, and a long and confidential correspondence ensued, which is of great historical interest. One of Clay's letters may well be reproduced in this place, for the reason that it clearly defines his position and foreshadows his defeat. It is as follows:



“Confidential.

ASHLAND, 11th Sept., 1844.

“Your friendly letter of the fourth instant, which I have just received, affords me a good opportunity of writing to you, which I much desired. I am extremely sorry that my letters to Alabama should have produced any unfavorable impressions in your portion of Ohio. It was not my intention, in those letters, to vary the ground in the smallest degree which I assumed in the Raleigh letter. It had been represented to me that in that letter I had displayed a determined opposition to the annexation of Texas to the United States, although the whole Union might be in favor of it, and it could be peacefully and honorably effected, upon favorable terms. It was my purpose in those Alabama letters to say that no personal or private motives prompted me to oppose annexation, but that my opinion in opposition to it was founded wholly upon public and general considerations. I therefore said that if, by common consent of the Union, without National dishonor, without war, and upon just conditions, the object of annexation could be accomplished, I did not wish to be considered as standing in opposition to the wishes of the whole Confederacy, but upon the supposition stated would be glad to see those wishes gratified. Could I say less? Can it be expected that I should put myself in opposition to the concurrent

will of the whole Nation, if such should be its will? . . . . My position is very singular. Whilst at the South I am represented as a liberty man, at the North I am decried as an ultra supporter of slavery, when, in fact, I am neither one nor the other. This peculiarity of position exposes me to a cross-fire from opposite directions, and rendered it indispensably necessary that I should come out, a few days ago, with a note in relation to the letter of Cassius M. Clay, Esq., just published in the Tribune. . . . . You, I trust, will be satisfied with the position taken in my note, that the existence, maintenance, and continuance of the institution of slavery, depend exclusively upon State power and authority. As you had expressed regret that my Raleigh speech should have omitted that principle, I thought the occasion a suitable one for reasserting it.

“I am, with great respect,

Your friend and ob’d’t serv’t,

H. CLAY.”

Hon. J. A. Giddings.

Scarcely had Congress reconvened, when the Texas question came up again. Benton had opposed and defeated Calhoun’s original treaty of annexation, the discussion of which in the Senate was coincident with the speech of Giddings already referred to. Benton desired the annexation, but

was frightened at the high-handed and unconstitutional action of the President to that end. He opposed not the end but the means, and at the first opportunity offered a joint resolution providing for the annexation. Resolution after resolution, amendment after amendment, was offered. The contest was really as to the payment of the Texan debt, and as to the immediate admission of the new territory as a State, by a provision of its annexation. Mr. Giddings, while taking part from day to day in the almost constant debates, made no set speech on the subject during the session, until the 22d of January, 1843, when certain letters of Calhoun, Secretary of State, to our Ministers at Versailles and St. James, arguing that slavery was a humane and beneficent institution, came before the House in connection with the Texan question. Mr. Giddings never suffered such a challenge to his conscience to pass, and obtaining the floor, he delivered a masterly speech, in which he considered the economical, moral, and constitutional bearings of the question. He showed, with a clearness that had perhaps never been equalled, the inconsistency of the South, which in one breath declared slavery to be an institution purely under the control of the several States in which it existed, and in the next demanded that the Federal Government annex the territory of an independent power, assume a vast debt, and face

the certainty of war—all for the protection of this same institution, which it could not control or abolish. By the simple recital of incidents, and use of vital statistics, he excoriated Mr. Calhoun and exposed his falsehood and hypocrisy to the contempt of the world.

In spite, however, of all efforts to the contrary, Texas was, by joint resolution, passed February 28, 1845, annexed and admitted to the Union as a State, with an immediate representation of two members, pending an apportionment. So was completed the preliminary step of a great and costly wrong. A short extra session was held; Polk was inaugurated, and Congress adjourned *sine die*.

At the threshold of the Twenty-ninth Congress stood the champions of the slave power, resolved to find a new way by which to silence petitions, which the defeat of the infamous Atherton gag threatened to shower upon them. Their first step was to secure a speaker without conscience or identity apart from their own. Him they found in John W. Davis, of Indiana. Davis so made up his committees as to insure the death of any petition relating to slavery, which might be referred to them. During that session, at least, the anti-slavery men found themselves but little better off for their ostensible victory.

The overweening interest of the session was the

Oregon question, suggested by the astute Polk in his message, and soon crystallized. First, however, the annexation of Texas, agreed to by the last Congress, was consummated. Then a resolution was passed, directing that the Secretary of State give notice to England that the joint occupation of Oregon by Great Britain and the United States, should be forthwith terminated, and that the United States claimed right and title to the whole. The Territory then embraced all the country west of the Rocky mountains, north of the forty-second parallel, and extending, according to the programme adopted, to  $54^{\circ} 40''$  north latitude—far into the present British possessions. This demand, if adhered to, meant war with England; and the South, not satisfied with its Mexican imbroglio, was mad for war. Giddings and Adams, while never favoring such a demand, or desiring war, saw the advantage of their position over that of the South. On the 5th of January, 1846, Mr. Giddings addressed the House, favoring the absorption of Oregon as proposed, in a speech which cut the South to the quick. He turned back at them the batteries which they had used against him in the Texan debate. He showed how a war with England, if successful, could only end in the acquisition of the whole of Canada by the United States; how that territory would be naturally a non-slave holding one; how, in the event of a

continued union of the States, free States would be erected, and anti-slavery Representatives and Senators returned to Congress therefrom. In the event of a division between the North and South, the acquisition would, he admitted, be of infinite value to the former. He also showed that such a war could but be one of emancipation; that England would attack us from the West Indies, with regiments of blacks; proclaim freedom for all slaves joining her force, that a servile insurrection must follow, and, whatever the issue of the war, slavery would be upset. Hence he favored the measure.

Adams followed in the same tone, but, had he not done so, Giddings' speech would have killed the bill. Great Britain proposed a compromise, offering the forty-fifth parallel as a boundary line. The Senate, in an agony, advised Polk to accept the offer, which he at once did, thus closing one of the most brilliant exhibitions of legislative, executive, and diplomatic finesse that has ever distinguished our country. Whoever originated the plan carried out by Giddings and Adams, it was beautifully executed. Some credit for simultaneous discovery, at least, is evidently due the Hon. Thurlow Weed, then as always a long-sighted and clear-headed man. Witness the following letter :

“ASTOR HOUSE, NEW YORK, }  
December 24, 1845. }

“DEAR SIR: If the President in his message plays the game of war, why not out-trump him? Wars are sometimes National blessings, though generally the reverse. But are there not worse things than war? The Mexican war, though causeless and ugly, yet contained jewels. If war with England would give us a tariff, Canada, and freedom, shall we refuse it?

“But it has another aspect—the duplicity of the administration. Were you to take this ground, in one of your strong, vigorous fifteen-minute speeches, it would blow the war and the administration sky-high.

“Very truly yours,

“THURLOW WEED.

“Hon. J. Giddings.”

So much for Oregon.

## VII.

The causes which led to the Florida wars were not, so late as 1846, entirely removed. Particularly was this true with the Seminole tribe of Indians. Large numbers of escaped negro slaves had fled to Florida during the earlier years of the century, had been adopted by the Seminoles as members of their tribe, and had intermarried with them. These people and their descendants were still with the tribe, when the Government at last compelled the Seminoles to follow the Creeks and Cherokees across the Mississippi river. The reservation selected for them was within the jurisdiction and territory of the Creeks, who were creatures of the slave-holders, and, fearing that the Creeks would seize the African and half-breed members of their tribe, many of the Seminoles refused to proceed, and settled upon the lands of the Cherokees. This made trouble between the Cherokees and Seminoles, and a treaty was secretly made with the latter, whereby they were to proceed to the reservation intended for them, and



all disputes between the tribes, *as to any property owned or claimed by either*, were to be submitted to the arbitrament of the President of the United States. Of this secret treaty Giddings managed to obtain a copy, and when, in February, 1846, the sum of forty thousand dollars was included in the Indian appropriation bill, for the purpose of carrying out its provisions, he astonished the Southern supporters of the bill by opposing it, and assailing them from the text of a treaty which they supposed to be hidden in the archives of the department. The chairman of the Committee on Ways and Means made a lame reply, but could not deny a single allegation, and was obliged to leave the President of the United States before his people and the world in the light of an umpire between barbarian slave stealers and the no less barbarous defenders of a right which he did not recognize. In the meantime, the prophecies of the opponents of slavery regarding the Mexican matter were being more than fulfilled. War had come, and every student of history knows the story of its prosecution. Our part in the war was principally apparent in its effects upon the treasury, and in disasters to armies sent into an alien country, to fight the battles of a foreign state, for the benefit of a section of our own people. Giddings, who had opposed the war in its inception, and had been one of the first to expose the dan-

gers involved in the measure from which it sprung, was as constant and consistent in opposing its prosecution. It was never aught but a war of aggrandizement, worthy of Nero or Alexander in its conception, but executed as if by a parcel of school-boys. The war was commenced by the President, who sent Taylor and his troops into Texas with orders to proceed to the Rio Grande, and, if deemed wise, to cross that stream and press into the territory of Mexico. It was months before Polk made any communication to Congress on the subject. When he did so, Taylor and his army were in Mexico, ostensibly to guard against Indian outbreaks on the border, really to wage a war of conquest. The Mexican troops opposed this outrage. Then Polk sent a communication to Congress, announcing that war existed by the act of Mexico. A resolution to that effect was introduced into the House and forced through without debate, under a movement of the previous question—the House of Representatives of the United States actually allowing itself to be compelled to declare war against a neighboring power without a word of discussion. The bill came up, however, in committee of the whole, on the 12th day of May, 1846, when Mr. Giddings threw himself into the debate, and made the first of a series of speeches which did very much to disgust the people of the United States with the war, and to

place clearly before them, and before the world, the true responsibility for its inauguration. Some small quotations from this speech may not be amiss:

“I apprehend that Mexico has maturely considered the subject, and enters upon the war with a solemn conviction that her existence as a nation depends upon her resistance to our aggressiveness. The correspondence before us proves the fact; conclusively proves it. Why, sir, look at General Taylor’s report, and you will see a devotion manifested by the officers and peasantry of Mexico, that speaks in thunder tones to those who regard the conquest of that people as a trifling matter. See the females and children at the approach of our troops leave their homes, consecrated by all the ties of domestic life, and, while they are fleeing to the Mexican army for protection, see the husbands and fathers apply the torch to their own dwellings, and then fly to arms in the defense of their institutions. I confess I was struck with deep solemnity when that communication was read at your table; and, in imitation of William Pitt, I was ready to swear that, if I were a Mexican, as I am an American, I would never sheathe my sword while an enemy remained upon my native soil.”

Such was the bold stand taken by Mr. Giddings, upon the proposal to declare the war begun by Mexico. But the bill making such declaration

passed. The war dragged its slow length along. Near the close of the session the Government asked that three million dollars be placed at the disposal of the President to enable him to force the war to a speedy and honorable termination. Mr. Wilmot, of Pennsylvania, on the 8th. of August, 1846, moved an amendment to the bill making the appropriation, that slavery be forever prohibited in any territory which might be acquired from Mexico as a result of the war. The matter came up at the next session and, in February, 1847, Mr. Giddings advocated the amendment in a speech, in the course of which he said:

“Gentlemen from the South, with deep emotions, have solemnly warned us, that, if we persist in our determination, the Union will be dissolved. I do not doubt their sincerity. But I would rather see this Union rent into a thousand fragments, than have my country disgraced, and its moral purity sacrificed, by the prosecution of a war for the extension of human bondage. Nor would I avoid the issue were it in my power. For many years I have seen the rights of the North, and the vital principles of our Constitution, surrendered to the haughty vaporings of Southern members. For many years I have exerted my humble influence to stimulate Northern members to the maintenance of our honor and of the Constitution. And now I devoutly thank that God

who has permitted me to witness the union of a portion of Northern members, of both political parties, upon a question so vital to our interests and honor, as well as to humanity."

The amendment was adopted by the House but rejected by the Senate, and the three million dollars followed other millions that had gone before, without condition; yet the Wilmot proviso was fruitful in its death, for it furnished at last the common basis upon which, from the discontented elements of the Whigs and Democrats, meeting with the small and ineffective Liberty party, was to be evolved the Free Soil party, which, while it never elected a President, still came, as the sound of a voice crying in the wilderness, to prepare the way for the Republican party and the final overthrow of slavery.

There was one and but one other notable opportunity for Giddings during that session. In March the perennial *Amistad* case came to the House in a new form. An appropriation bill came back from the Senate, saddled with an amendment providing for the payment of fifty thousand dollars to the owners of the negroes liberated from that vessel. Giddings made an attack upon the amendment and concluded, when lo! in his place, arose the tottering veteran, John Quincy Adams, aroused like an old warrior at the bugle call, and with his still peerless eloquence attacked the

outrage sought to be committed. Every ear in the galleries was strained, every member ceased his occupation and listened, many gathered about the place of the orator, and not a sound was heard save the quavering voice of the speaker. There seemed in this attention, so impartially paid, something almost like prevision, for in truth the voice of the "Old Man Eloquent" was there raised for the last time, and raised in the cause which, for more than sixteen years, he had constantly and consistently advocated.

The amendment was lost by an overwhelming majority. The second session of the Twenty-ninth Congress may be thus dismissed, and few have there been in the history of that body which it is a greater pleasure to pass by.

Already the probabilities for the Presidential campaign of 1848 were outlined. Polk was too hopelessly imbecile to be named for re-election. Taylor, in Mexico, was posing for the nomination. Giddings and his friends saw that his election would give an administration which would be like the last, with all the bad points emphasized. Giddings had opportunity and excuse enough to oppose Taylor in the House. This he did, consistently and openly. Anything like reservation or pretense was foreign to him in politics as in his private life. After the adjournment he wrote a strong letter to the same effect to the New York

Tribune. Greeley published the communication, but sent a personal letter to Mr. Giddings, of which the following is a copy:

“HON. J. R. GIDDINGS:

“DEAR SIR: I think you seriously err in making a fight against Taylor in the spirit of your letter, which I have printed this morning. Nothing can be more fragile than such a popularity as his, unless it may be his life. A hasty plate of soup may upset him in a twinkling. Now your mode of opposing him will exasperate those who have taken him up, from thoughtlessness, or a belief in his popularity, and they will oppose our man at all events, and probably adhere to Taylor. It is surely not wise. I want a Whig Congress now, and am willing to take North Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky Whigs to make it up. Are not you? Then I want a Whig President. Corwin is my first choice—but I prefer almost any Whig to a loco-foco. Let us commend our own man, or set forth the qualities we require, rather than assail another. Yours,

HORACE GREELEY.”

Henry Wilson, however, writing under date of April 10th, of the same year, and speaking of the Taylor movement, says: “Can we not defeat this movement? We must, if possible. I would



not submit to it, come what may. . . . Let the party be divided, rather than submit to have any man who is a slaveholder, or in favor of slave territory, elected. Can we not, if Taylor is forced upon us, call a convention of the Whigs of the free States, and put up two good and true men—make a full declaration of principles—and appeal to the country, and nominate electors, and contest every district in the free States?"

This was Giddings' view as well. He saw that the time had come to accept defeat upon a good platform, rather than victory at the expense of a compromise with Satan. He probably had little or no hope of immediate success, but he had faith to believe that there were enough voters of his own view on the subject of slavery and the Wilmot proviso, to form the nucleus of a new party, which would ultimately win success.

The Thirtieth Congress commenced in December, 1847. Giddings and some of his friends determined to make at least a protest against the election of a speaker who would galvanize the Atherton gag, and give it a *post mortem* efficiency. Hence, when Winthrop, a hopeless doughface, was nominated for speaker, Giddings procured Palfrey to write the candidate a letter, asking him if he would, in the event of his election, so arrange the committees as to procure a respectful hearing for petitions from the free States. To this no answer



came, and Giddings, with several of his associates, gave him no votes. For this, Giddings was assailed by the Whig press in a most violent manner. The Cleveland Herald was peculiarly bitter and unreasoning in its denunciations, and Mr. Giddings made an answer which justified his action so clearly and unquestionably as to fairly force Mr. Winthrop into print in his own defense. Winthrop was elected, and when the House committees were named, they were such as to settle any doubts which might have existed as to the truth of Mr. Giddings' statements; they were, from first to last, brought into being with the evident mission of serving the South, and denying right and justice to the friend of the negro. So, again, silence was insured in Congress, so far as petitions and protests against slavery were concerned.

Not much was done in Congress during the earlier weeks of the session. The House and Senate thanked Taylor, by joint resolution, for his services at Buena Vista, and tendered the same compliment to Scott, for his gallantry at Vera Cruz. Giddings alone, of all in the House, voted against this testimonial to Taylor. Taylor men had been astute and politic, and were satisfied.

On the 21st of February the House convened as usual. Some not very important business was under consideration, when there was a sudden flutter in one portion of the room, a prostrate man

was tenderly raised and carried to the speaker's room, the House adjourned, and soon the Senate. John Quincy Adams had been stricken with paralysis, and lay senseless, and all but dead. For two days the anxiety continued; House and Senate daily met, and immediately adjourned—then the great man died, and all met to do him honor. Even beside his cold body, party feeling was not forgotten, for Giddings, the friend and disciple of the dead chief, was ignored,—was not named to share the burden of the bier. He followed him to Quincy, among the throng, stricken with a grief deep and sincere as any which paid the tribute of tears beside the grave.

In April, 1848, between seventy and eighty slaves attempted to make their escape from the District of Columbia, on board the schooner *Pearl*. The negroes, as well as the captain and mate of the vessel, were captured, returned to Washington, and imprisoned in the jail. On the following morning, Mr. Giddings, as always fearless of danger, visited the prisoners in the jail. An infuriated mob at once collected, forced the outer gate of the jail, and ascended to the one which opened into the hall, where the Congressman was conversing with Dayton, captain of the *Pearl*. There they halted, and demanded that Giddings leave the jail at once, on peril of his life. This he refused to do, continued and concluded his conversation, and, when

entirely prepared, passed through the door and stood, quite undefended, in the face of the armed and angry mob. For one moment they stood opposing his passage, then, as if unable to resist his splendid dignity and bravery, parted to right and left, and suffered him to pass, like the Apostle of old, from the prison gates. Mr. Palfrey offered, in the House, a resolution inquiring into the facts, and a debate followed, which, for bitterness and vileness of abuse, rivals any that disgraces the journal of that body. Of all this, Mr. Giddings was personally the target, and for two days he sat in silence under it. On the third, he spoke—not in his own defense, for he had nothing to defend—but in bitter arraignment of his assailants, and in bold defiance of their power to injure him or his cause. Many of Mr. Giddings' utterances, upon the floor of Congress, have been quoted in these pages, but, as no words of the author can so well contribute to a clear understanding of the man and his motives, some portion of this speech may well be given here. He said, in the course of his speech: “Mr. Speaker, I will inform that gentleman, with all sincerity, that it is too late in the day to attempt to seal the lips of Northern Representatives, in regard to the slave trade, or on any other subject which comes before this body. I give notice to that gentleman, and to all others, that I shall speak just what I think, on any, or every sub-

ject which comes before us. It is my intention to call things by their right names, to speak, so far as I am able, in such direct, plain, and simple language as to be understood. It is true that freedom of speech has been put down in this hall; it was for years trampled under foot by the slave power. I sat here during several sessions of Congress, in degrading silence, and often listened to the supercilious tirades of the slavery members against myself, and against the advocates of liberty, while I was not permitted to reply. The slave power then reigned triumphant in this body. Sir, it is well known, that for asserting in this House some of the plainest principles of constitutional law; I was censured and driven from my seat here. But, thank God, after years of toil and effort, we have regained the freedom of debate. And now, I say to the slaveholders present, we shall never again surrender it. . . . Why, does the gentleman from Tennessee expect that I shall ask him, or any other member, when I shall speak, what I shall say, and how I shall say it? Do Southern gentlemen suppose that they can bring into this body the practices which they pursue on their plantations? Sir, they forget the theater in which they are acting. They forget that they are among freemen; they surely think themselves among slaves, accustomed to crouch and tremble at their frowns. This hall is not the place for the

display of supercilious dictation. . . . .  
When this proposition, to restrain the freedom of debate, is published in my district, the school boys will laugh at it. But the gentleman thinks that my language in this hall has excited a love of liberty among the slaves. As to that, I have made no inquiry. If it has imparted to them information, or inspired in them a desire to regain the rights which God has given them, I shall rejoice at it. I would not desist from speaking truth in this hall, if all the slaves in the universe were listening to me. No, sir, if I had the power, I would, from this forum, give to every slave south of Mason and Dixon's line a perfect knowledge of his rights. I would explain, to their understanding, the oppression that weighs down their intellects, and shuts out truth from their comprehension. I would explain to them the outrage which has robbed them of their humanity, reduced them to the level of chattels, and which subjects them to sale, like brutes, in the market. Could my voice be heard by them from this hall, I would teach them that they came from the hand of the same Creator as ourselves, and were endowed by him with the same inalienable rights as those who now lord it over them."

The time for the Presidential convention was approaching, and Taylor was evidently to be the nominee of the Whigs. From the time when the

shadow of this event first fell across the political course, Giddings had never wavered in his determination to refuse, in any event, to vote for or in any manner support a man who, to his mind, represented the incarnation of the Mexican wrong, and could not but be recognized as a devotee of slavery and of the slave power. He was far from being alone in his determination, though few held so strongly against Taylor as did he. Greeley wrote him a note in April, strongly urging the address of a letter, signed by the anti-slavery men in Congress, to every prospective Presidential candidate, asking the views of each upon the issue raised by the Wilmot proviso. Greeley was at that time, and always, opposed in feeling to Taylor. On the 7th of June, 1848, Taylor was nominated by the Whigs in convention at Philadelphia, without any previous announcement of principles. These were, in fact, but too well known. Cass was nominated by the Democrats. He had opposed the Wilmot proviso, and the choice between the two was a hard one for the Free Soilers. Giddings was determined upon an independent nomination. Many were with him, but some, whose action was biased by personal considerations, were less adventurous. Greeley wrote, under date of June 20th, as follows: "I have yours of the 17th. I have now waited twelve days for such demonstrations of free sentiment, as ought to have followed the Baltimore and

Philadelphia nominations. The truth is there is no deep devotion to principle among any large portion of the American people. Each man has a keen regard for his own rights, and for whatever may palpably affect them, but for the rights of 'niggers' who cares? . . . . The Free Soil platform will hardly carry a State. It might serve to elect Cass, but would only throw all the anti-slavery element of both parties out of Congress, and enable the extensionists to carry slavery to the Pacific, without a struggle in Congress. It is idle to stand, when Webster, and Calhoun, and Ashmun, and Wilson, give in. To be sacrificed for the sake of principle will do. To court ruin for the benefit of Cass, I do not find so inviting. Of course I do not ask to influence your course; I but indicate my own. All I have is embarked in the Tribune, with a great deal more, belonging to others. I cannot wreck it all in a course, of which the fullest contemplated success would seem to be the triumph of Cass. My present purpose is to say and do very little with regard to the Presidency, but to act generally with the Whig party."

Charles Sumner had no newspaper, and hence took a different course. At the conclusion of a letter written to urge Mr. Giddings to speak in Boston, he says: "I have just met Abbot Lawrence. I said to him: 'I am glad you were not



nominated for the Vice-Presidency.' 'That is a doubtful compliment,' said a bystander; 'I would not have Mr. Lawrence's name,' said I, 'desecrated by association with General Taylor.' He then said, 'Do you know where you are going? You will have to support Martin Van Buren.' 'I am ready,' was my reply. So I am. If the Utica\* Convention nominates him, will he not be our man? He has suffered in the cause of anti-Texas."

Unaffected by the discouragement of the doubters, Giddings, on the 30th of June—the war appropriation being under discussion—made a speech in which he embodied a declaration of independence on the part of the Free Soil party, and practically gave notice that he and his friends would not support Taylor. The history of the campaign, the nomination of Van Buren and Adams by the Free Soilers, and the election of Taylor do not need rehearsal. The Free Soilers did not secure an electoral vote, and the effect of their campaign, though important in its influence upon public sentiment and the future, had nothing to do with the immediate result.

The second session of the Thirtieth Congress began in December of the year 1849. Mr. Giddings took his seat with a heavy heart. Adams

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\*The Convention was held at Buffalo.



was dead, and while many new supporters of the great cause had arisen, he felt the loss of his old-time friend and counsellor most keenly. Then, too, he came in the shadow of a defeat, and in deep anxiety for the fate of his country, since the helm seemed to be indeed in the hands of its enemies. The solitude of his life he knew would be great, for absolute social ostracism awaited him, now that he had cut the slender thread which had bound him to the Whig party. His own constituency, and the old-line Whigs of northern Ohio, who had mostly supported Van Buren, were still with him, and the little circle of Free Soil Representatives and Senators afforded him almost the only break in his lonely life. The year was notable to him for the unsuccessful effort made by his friends in Ohio to elect him to the Senate from that State, an effort which failed for the reason that, while all men admitted his honesty, many feared to send to the Senate one who avowedly held his principles above his party.

Mr. Riddle has well said that there is small reason to regret this result, for Giddings was needed in the House, and had a work to do there, which must have been abandoned had he attained to the greater dignity of the Senatorship. Neither he nor the people could have afforded the exchange. Then, too, to again borrow from Riddle, the place was held for Wade, a man who had his mission to

perform, and might never have found the field, but for the defeat of his neighbor and friend. In Congress the Southern men were organized and combative. They held conferences with closed doors, and finally formulated and promulgated their famous address to the people of the United States.

For the brief period from the beginning to the close of 1849, it is possible for us to catch a few glimpses of Mr. Giddings' personality, of which his modesty and singleness of purpose, when in the House, keep us so much in ignorance. The second and last existing of what was probably a complete series of private journals, covers these months. It is interesting to notice the evident change in manner of thought, the ripening and development, since 1838-9, when the journal previously quoted was kept, and at the same time to see how, in the seclusion of his chamber and in the frankness of this private record, he gives evidence of having carried with him, during the ten years of his public life, an unchanged devotion to the cause which he had made his own. Never was a man so engrossed without bringing something to pass, and the world owes to his constant putting aside of every less weighty thought and measure, the effect which his labors produced.

The Whigs did not ostracize Mr. Giddings without giving him a chance. He was promised the Ohio Senatorship upon the one simple and

easy condition, of declaring his fealty to the party which held the bauble up to him, but, though five minutes' time, a few lines scrawled and signed, would have given him the prize, he never thought of taking it at such a cost.

In December, almost at the beginning of the session, came before the House the old question of slavery, and the old effort to induce Congress to recognize slaves as property, in the form of a bill to pay Antonia Pacheco the value of a slave lost in the public service. Upon this measure Mr. Giddings made one of the most powerful speeches of his life, thus defeating it. Later, the vote by which it was lost, was reconsidered, and the bill passed the House, but was never brought up in the Senate. Mr. Giddings' journal gives so clear a view of the difficulties under which he labored, the conscientiousness of his effort, and the methods which he adopted in preparing for this debate, that it will bear quotation, as furnishing a valuable contribution to our knowledge of the man. On the 3d of January he made the following entry:

“The ordinary business of legislation was resumed to-day. Several members called on me to assure me that the bill for the relief of Pacheco will pass, and that I am wrong in entertaining the doctrine that there is no property in man. Among those who appeared thus determined to adhere to

cherished errors, was Horace Greeley, of the New York Tribune.

“January 4th. My motion to reconsider the report upon the engrossment of the bill to pay Antonia Pacheco for a slave, came up to-day in order, but I postponed it to give opportunity to pass the bill to establish a board of private claims. From different parts of the country the papers teem with abuse of myself, and it is quite evident that the doughfaces here are trying to prepare themselves and others to sustain the bill of Pacheco, against my opposition. The subject rests with so much weight on my mind that I cannot sleep at night, and it is visibly affecting my health. I have prepared the argument with much labor, and never entered upon a case with better preparation. My friend, Horace Mann, of Massachusetts, advises me to pass over the Constitutional arguments, and make a strictly legal effort. Mr. Palfrey advises me to go into a Constitutional investigation. I feel that I am to speak to the country, and I shall, therefore, address the reader of my speech, rather than the hearer; posterity, rather than the House of Representatives.

“January 6th. The first business in order this day was my motion to reconsider the vote on the Pacheco bill. I went to the House trembling with fear of a failure. My health was poor. Mr. Rockwell, of Connecticut, appealed to me to post-

pone the matter. I could not do so without endangering my health, and hence I proceeded with my speech. I soon saw that I had the ear of the House. Certain slaveholders and some dough-faces attempted to keep up conversation and laughter for awhile, but I soon saw the deep-seated feeling that worked in their breasts. I had no lack of words or of thoughts, and the appearance of the House indicated that my argument told. When I sat down I felt that I had never made a more effective speech. . . . Some friends came to me and said that I had surpassed all expectation, and had undoubtedly killed the bill. Some members who had not spoken to me for weeks, came to my seat and congratulated me on my effort. The slaveholders looked solemn and perplexed. In order to save time and test the full effect of my remarks, I withdrew my motion to reconsider, and took the vote on the passage of the bill. The scene that followed I will not attempt to describe, but leave it to the newspapers; but when I saw the speaker constrained to give a vote on the bill—the House being divided eighty-nine to ninety—I rejoiced greatly, and really now think those among the happiest moments of my life. . . . At evening I met our Free Soil friends at Dr. Palfrey's. They all congratulated me upon the manner in which I had acquitted my-

self, and were united in the opinion that it had been a great day for freedom."

Men are apt to be honest with themselves. If there be any egotism about a person it is very likely to come out in his journal, but the child-like modesty and simplicity of the statement which Mr. Giddings makes of what was, in truth, a great achievement, are characteristic of him, and are never once belied in all the pages of journals and correspondence. He was accused of being overbearing; overbearing he was, but only with the stern boldness which his cause gave him. It was not he, but the truth speaking in him, which made him capable of the persistent and almost dogged resistance which carried his work to its final fruition. Of this modesty no better example can be found than the entry made in his journal, while his prospects for election to the Ohio Senatorship were being canvassed. On the 24th of January he writes:

"By the mail of this evening I received several letters from Columbus which speak cheerfully of my prospects for the Senate. One from Dr. Townsend gives me some little hope of election, for which, however, I do not feel anxious, as I think I can do more good in the House, where I have established an influence, than I can in the Senate, where I should meet with intellects of a higher order; men of nerve, experience, and of far

greater intelligence. But the moral effect of my election would be great, and on that account I feel a desire to succeed to that office."

On February 23d, the news reached Washington that Chase was elected to the Senate, and Mr. Giddings dismissed what cannot but have been an attractive possibility, in these few words: "In the *Intelligencer* of this morning I found the news of Mr. Chase's election to the Senate. I was so far from being mortified at this result, that I may truly say it gave me pleasure. I felt that it would probably promote the cause more than my own elevation to that office. Mr. Palfrey seemed to feel some degree of mortification, and expressed regrets at my failure. This gave me more pain than I felt at the defeat of my election."

As "misfortunes never come singly," the evening of the day on which Mr. Giddings received news of his defeat at Columbus, the ex-commander and President-elect, General Taylor, reached Washington. Mr. Giddings dismisses this event in much the same tone ascribed by Shakespeare to Marullus, when rebuking the populace for their ovation to Cæsar. These were his words: "General Taylor was to arrive at half-past seven o'clock P. M., but did not reach the city until half-past eight. A large number of people gathered at the depot, as he approached—several cannons were fired, rockets were sent up, and the



multitude raised a shout. I was taking a walk and had reached the west front of the Capitol when the cars arrived. I listened to the senseless clamor, then walked to my lodgings with a lower estimate of mankind than I had previously entertained."

That Mr. Giddings was almost completely cut off from the society of the Capitol, has already been stated. The journal for the winter of 1848-49 abounds in references to the fact, and the philosophical acceptance of it is at once amusing and to a degree pathetic. There was surely a great struggle in the mind of a proud and sensitive man, before he brought himself to write these words: "This evening the speaker had a party, and I suppose all the members of both parties were invited except myself. I occupied the evening in writing out a speech which I hope will tell against him and his party."

The Southern manifesto, to which reference has already been made, was adopted, and excited the deep interest, while it did not involve the personal record of Mr. Giddings. He tells how he sat in his room, watching the lights in the Capitol, and expecting a message regarding the result, until sleep overcame him and he retired to rest, leaving the conference still in session. "The mountain labored and gave birth to a ridiculous mouse," for, when these night sessions were over, and the



result was promulgated to the world, it was but a restatement of old fallacies; a reaffirmation of threadbare lies.

One more thing remained for the slave-holding and slave-favoring majority of the House to attempt, and that was the admission of California and New Mexico as slave States. Mr. Giddings was not now, as of old, standing almost alone in the cause of liberty; about him was a little band of the best and most brilliant men in Congress. Palfrey, the learned, polished, and devoted member for Massachusetts; Root, of Ohio, one of the subtlest and most able debaters in the House; Tuck, of New Hampshire; Wilmot, of Pennsylvania; these, and others like them, stood at his side. Perhaps Charles Francis Adams deserves the credit of being far-sighted enough to discern what were the plans of the South, for in Mr. Giddings' diary, under date of February 9, 1849, appears a statement that a letter had been received by Mr. Palfrey from Mr. Adams, warning the anti-slavery men that an effort would probably be made, at the close of the session, to secure a territorial extension in the interest of slavery. From that time until the adjournment, the forces of the anti-slavery party slept on their arms, and when, on the second of March, but one day before the adjournment, the California admission was pressed as a clause of the civil and diplomatic bill, it found

the anti-slavery men, headed by Mr. Giddings, opposed to it, with determination enough, and votes enough, to block the wheels of legislation rather than allow it to pass. The journal says, under date of March 2d:

“At the assembling of the House this morning I was told that the President elect had been electioneering with the members to sustain the amendment to the Civil and Diplomatic bill, which, in effect, extends slavery into California. Soon after the House was called to order, the committee on Ways and Means reported an amendment to the Senate’s amendment. This I much regretted, as it admitted the correctness of placing this important measure in an appropriation bill. When the vote was taken in committee of the whole, on a question of order, I obtained a decision which strikes out the Senate’s amendments entirely, and this brought down upon me the censure of the whole Whig party, who raised the cry that I had defeated the whole object of the committee on Ways and Means. But the vote of the House showed my correctness. We rejected the amendment by one hundred and fourteen to one hundred.”

It should be understood that there was a deadlock between Senate and House on the subject of California, a clear majority of the Senate favoring the slave-holders’ side of the question, and the

House opposing it. It should also be understood that the fate of the Territory of New Mexico, about to be erected, hung also in the balance. Let Mr. Giddings' journal of the 2d of March tell the remainder of the story: "When we met this evening, we learned that the committee of conference had failed to agree. The doubt which hung over the subject became painful. Men became excited and forgot other business. The House proceeded in the ordinary course of business. The committee of conference reported their disagreement at about 3 o'clock P. M. At this point great excitement was manifested in all parts of the House. The galleries were filled to suffocation, every part of the House was crowded, and a contest ensued for the purpose of obtaining parliamentary advantage. The House receded from its former amendment, and then proceeded to amend the Senate's amendment, by providing for the continuance in force of the Mexican laws. At this point the excitement became intense. Several gentlemen had abandoned their former position and voted with the South. Southern men were boisterous; many Northern men were so excited that they appeared to know little what was going on. My friend, Mr. —, of Illinois, came over to the Whig side of the House, where I was sitting, and told me that, if violence occurred on their side of the House, I must not forget them

nor leave my friends there to suffer. He left me and returned to his seat. I soon after crossed over and found him sitting silent. I inquired if they were as good-natured as the Whigs on our side of the House were. He said not; that threats were made to take their hearts out. I made a light reply. Mr. Meade, of Virginia, was standing by, and remarked to another gentleman, that there was no way to manage them, but to put them in personal fear. I remarked: 'That is not a very good way.' He looked pale, his lips quivered, and, shaking his fist in my face, he began to threaten me, at the same time seizing me by the collar with his left hand. Looking him coolly in the face, I told him not to be excited, when other gentlemen interfered and took him from me."

Then follows a statement of the amendments of the bill.

Mr. Giddings continues: "I then visited the Senate chamber. Several members of that body were greatly intoxicated—too much so to appear in public. A long discussion on the amendment took place, which occupied until 5 o'clock on Tuesday, March 4th, when they receded from their amendment, and the bill was sent to the President for his signature. So ended the Thirtieth Congress, amid drunkenness and disgraceful confusion."

The opening of the Thirty-first Congress was

sufficiently uneventful. The election of Speaker occupied the time of the House until the 22d of December. Mr. Howell Cobb was the candidate of the Democrats, Mr. Winthrop of the Whigs. Neither would give a pledge to make up the committees fairly, and hence the eight Free Soil votes, which would have elected either, were withheld and usually given, *per forma*, to Mr. Wilmot. At last, in pursuance of a Democratic resolution that the candidate having a plurality vote should be declared elected, Mr. Cobb became Speaker, having one hundred and two votes to Winthrop's ninety-nine. Though this result was accomplished through the medium of a resolution offered by a Democrat, the disappointed journals of the Whig party did not scruple to charge the Free Soilers with the responsibility for the result, and Mr. Giddings, as their leader, came in for a large share of personal abuse. Mr. Giddings answered in the House. Slavery was the topic of the session. The Free Soil members unremittingly pressed the subject, hanging their recurring motions and resolutions upon the admission of California, and the erection of New Mexico, with a prohibition of slavery, and upon the question of slavery in the District of Columbia. The immediate effect was to keep the Whigs and Democrats in a state of constant irritation and fear. However determined the friends of slavery might be to support their

peculiar institution to the last, they were very averse to the constant discussion of the subject which was thus forced upon them, compelling them, day after day, to commit and recommit themselves in the matter, and, as they could not but see, awakening the North and strengthening the anti-slavery party by the force of agitation.

The secondary effect was to drive the Southern members into a position of aggression. Day after day the Senate talked of nothing but the Clay and the Bell compromise resolutions. The debates on these subjects crowded all legitimate legislation from that body. Webster threw himself, body and soul, into the fight for the extensionist cause, and closed, when the session was very old, by advocating and assisting to a passage, the infamous fugitive slave law,\* which disgraced that session. Texas was bribed with ten million dollars, to consent to surrender territory that was never her own, and these two great wrongs finally had, to offset them, only the defeat of slavery in California and New Mexico, and the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. Giddings never worked

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\*These are Giddings' words regarding this bill: "The fugitive slave law is unconstitutional, is an outrage upon the rights of freemen, which, if enforced, will lead to civil war. It cannot be executed; it shall be repealed. Sooner than have the North submit to such degradation as to pass under the yoke of slavery, and pay tribute to slave-drivers for their runaways, I would see every slaveholder in the Nation hanged."

harder than at that session. He was constantly in debate, and no less than four of the set speeches which he selected for publication in the volume issued by him in 1853, were delivered during that session. The first was the defense of the Free Soilers against the charge of having thrown the Speakership into the hands of the Democrats; the second was on the California matter, the third in relation to New Mexico, and the last that reviewing the President's message. In the first-named speech he quite vindicated himself and his party, and incidently obtained a last opportunity to pay his devoirs to Mr. Winthrop. A copy of this speech he sent to Charles Sumner, and received the following reply: "I ought sooner to have thanked you for the satisfaction I have derived from your speech. Like everything from you it is solid in matter, and in style also. It is a contribution of real value to our cause. Your vote against Winthrop is completely vindicated. I cannot disguise the deep regard and reverence with which your unselfish devotion to high principles has filled me. John Q. Adams said to me that you were the most valuable member of Congress. He said the truth."

Thus the first session of the Thirty-first Congress came to an end, with the burthen of legislation decidedly favorable to slavery, and a feeling



of confidence on the part of the South, proportioned to the depression of the North.

From this point to the close of his career, it is far more difficult to trace the minute particulars of the life of Mr. Giddings than heretofore. Mr. Riddle, in his excellent sketch so often quoted, has acknowledged the same difficulty which meets the author here. The available private records are exhausted, no journals and but few of the letters of the Ohio veteran can be found. Letters of others addressed to him exist in great numbers, and offer a rich and tempting field to the historian, but one which must be left mostly untouched by the author of a work of this scope. Then, too, though Giddings was greater in every sense than in the earlier years of his services in the House, his was no longer a solitary greatness.

Webster had committed political suicide by his stand on the fugitive slave law and kindred subjects, and, beginning with the Thirty-second Congress, Charles Sumner took the seat which the orator of Massachusetts had so long held, and with him were Chase, of Ohio, Seward, of New York, and, shortly after, Wade, of Ohio. In the House, Palfrey, Tuck, and Root already, and, year by year, others as devoted and conscientious, were added to the Free Soil ranks, so that Giddings was no longer compelled to fight all the battles of freedom, or to fight any of them single handed, as in the days



following his investment more than a dozen years before. To follow closely his part in affairs for the seven years which intervened from the meeting of the Thirty-second Congress, until the end, would be intrinsically difficult, foreign to the object of this unpretentious little work, and of doubtful profit. The master in science will take one fossil bone of an extinct and unknown animal, and, so beautiful and consistent is the work of nature, that from this dumb and expressionless bit of matter, he will construct by synthesis a counterfeit presentment of the animal of which it was a part. So with Giddings. No one who has followed these pages thus far could hesitate in assigning to him his proper place in relation to every question which arose during the remaining years of his service. The few concluding pages of this book will hence be devoted to describing the episodes of those last years, rather than to attempting farther to follow the thread of his life.

## VIII.

The legislature of Ohio determined to defeat the re-election of Giddings, and why it is hard to say. Perhaps he was not enough of a party man; perhaps he thought too little of appropriations—at all events, during the session of 1851–1852 a “gerrymander” of the State was so made as to throw Giddings into the Twentieth District of Ohio, consisting of the counties of Ashtabula, Trumbull, and Mahoning, in which his enemies were confident he could not secure an election. Cuyahoga, Geauga, and Lake counties, held the old number, and were known as the Sixteenth District. When time brought the fall election of 1852, Giddings was the candidate of the Free Soil party, and found two men in the field against him. Of these one, Woods, received 4,428 votes; the other, Newton, 4,169; while the old champion surprised his friends, and confounded his enemies, by securing a vote of 5,752, and an election, in a hostile territory. A great dinner was given at Painesville

in his honor. The wisest and best men in the United States were bidden to the feast; many came, and many more sent, by telegraph or mail, kind and appreciative messages, which must have cut the narrow-minded enemies of the brave old man to the quick. And so again he returned in triumph to Washington, this time triumphant over the enemies who were of his own household, and with him went Edward Wade, of Cleveland, a brother of Ben Wade, and a man in thought and method, after Giddings' own heart, whom the scheme which was intended to unseat him, had made Representative from the new Sixteenth District.

At the same election, with Pierce, Scott, and Hale in the Presidential field, the Whig party died the death; the polished, useless administration of Pierce followed, and the Free Soil party made grand progress, by the very agency of defeat, towards its final triumph, under the Republican name.

The Thirty-second Congress, came with slavery exulting over the so-called compromise measures, and the fugitive slave law,—never so arrogant and overbearing. There seemed to be a union of Whigs and Democrats, upon the specious compromise platform, and both parties united in saying that abolitionism was dead, and slavery at last certain of definite and absolute recognition. Giddings and the Free Soilers saw further, and thought, as

they did not hesitate to say, that there could never be lasting peace between parties which had been for years so bitterly and radically opposed to each other. And so it proved. Almost in the same breath which boasted that slave agitation had been compromised out of existence, began the bickering between the parties concerning the credit for that result, neither wishing the other to gain political capital. Then Giddings, a member of the Committee on Territories, introduced a bill for the admission of Kansas. To this he attached no condition regarding slavery, for he held the inhibition of the Missouri compromise to be all sufficient. The bill passed the House, was held in the Senate, and when, during the early days of the next Congress, the subject again came up, the South, with its Northern contingent, consummated the greatest political outrage in the history of the United States, by the repeal of the Missouri compromise, the solemnly adopted compact against the Northern progress of slavery, which should have been as inviolable as the Constitution. The brood of wrongs and crimes which grew from this act, cannot, and need not, here be specified. Through all the days of the discussion, in and out of Congress, while the outrages of the bastard legislature and false Constitution of Lecompton were leading to the murder of free American citizens, by the long-haired ruffians of Missouri, and, worse,

by the soldiery of the United States, Giddings was instant, in argument, protest, and invective. The volume of his published speeches gives some glimpse of this work; the journal of the House gives more. One incident of the excitement is worthy of notice, as showing how naturally the friends of freedom turned to the old champion in those hours of trial, and, also, as related to subsequent events—that is the fact that there was a correspondence between Mr. Giddings and John Brown. The tone of the two letters appended is sufficient to show that, at that time certainly, no intimate relations existed between Brown and Giddings. The first is as follows:

CITY OF WESTON, MISSOURI, January 27, 1856.

HON. J. R. GIDDINGS,

Washington City.

DEAR SIR:

I presume an apology is unnecessary, in addressing a letter to one so warmly interested as yourself on the great question of the day, viz: the freeing of this great country from the curse of slavery. Sir, six months ago I left my native State, York, for a home in Kansas. I settled, on my arrival in the territory, about four miles from Lawrence, and built me a good house, where I resided until the border ruffians invaded the territory. They, knowing my adherence to the cause of freedom, and my being a Northern man, took

me a prisoner and kept me as such for four days, treating me worse than one of their slaves. After my release they told me I must leave the country. I did not do it, but went to Eaton, and remained there quietly until last Friday week, the day of election. They then sent their minions out to disturb our election, which they did. They killed two men for us. How long are we to be treated like dogs? General Pomeroy promised us men and means to carry on the war. Sir, are we to have them, or are we to be driven from the territory, after all the sacrifices of time and money we have made? Will you, sir, inform me if we are to have the means to drive the last B. R. from the country? I, for one, am ready to stay if we are. If we do not have them soon we will be driven from the land. Answer requested immediately. I must close for fear of interruption.

Respectfully yrs.,

JOHN BROWN.

The second, still more urgent, reads thus:

OSAWATOMIE, KANSAS TERRITORY, 20th  
February, 1856.

HON. JOSHUA R. GIDDINGS,  
Washington, D. C.

DEAR SIR:

I write to say that a number of the United States soldiers are quartered in this vicinity, for the

ostensible purpose of removing intruders from certain Indian lands. It is, however, believed that the administration has no thought of removing the Missourians from the Indian lands, but that the real object is to have the men in readiness to act in enforcement of the hellish enactments of the (so-called) Kansas Legislature; absolutely abominated by a great majority of the inhabitants of the territory and spurned by them up to this time. I confidently believe that the next movement on the part of the administration and its pro-slavery masters will be either to drive the people here to submit to those infernal enactments or to assume what will be termed treasonable grounds, by shooting down the poor soldiers of the country, with whom they have no quarrel whatever. I ask in the name of Almighty God; I ask in the name of our venerated forefathers; I ask in the name of all that good or true men ever held dear, will Congress suffer us to be driven to such "dire extremities"? Will anything be done? Please send me a few lines at this place. Long acquaintance with your public life and a slight personal acquaintance incline and embolden me to make this appeal to yourself. Everything is still on the surface just now. Circumstances are, however, of a most suspicious character.

Very Respectfully Yours,  
JOHN BROWN.

Anticipating events, it may here be said that, when John Brown lay wounded and a prisoner, after his capture at Harper's Ferry, Mason, of Virginia, and Vallandingham, with the true chivalry and honor of their home and party, went to the prisoner, conversed with him, and then gave forth a pretended confession of the brave old martyr, implicating Giddings in his plan against Virginia. The latter cut off a denial of this lie by Brown, but Giddings stamped it as false, in terms as withering and bitter as any ever applied, even to Vallandingham. Riddle tells us that a reward was offered in Richmond for Giddings, or for his head; well would it have been for the South had they had a few such heads.

To return: in December, 1855, the Thirty-fourth Congress convened. During all the long fight made by Mr. Giddings and his friends, from the adoption of the Atherton gag, in 1838, no substantial success had ever been made in securing freedom of petition on the subject of slavery, and justice in consideration of petitions and memorials so received. To be sure, the gag rule had been stricken from the manual, but, failing to keep silence by legislation, the same result had been secured by organization. When the Thirty-fourth Congress opened, Mr. Giddings took up the old battle, which he had waged at the organization of every Congress since his first opposition of Win-



throp. A coalition was effected of the Know-Nothings, numbering forty votes, and the Free Soilers, far more numerous. Resolutions were adopted by these allies, declaring that they would give their votes for speaker to no man who would not pledge himself, in advance, to so make up the committees as to insure fair and just treatment to all. No such pledge could be obtained from the candidates of the old parties, hence, Nathaniel P. Banks, a fearless and outspoken enemy of slavery—a man who then used his tongue as he later used his sword, was nominated. The battle was fierce and long; December and January passed, and February came, finding the House still unorganized. Finally, on the 4th day of February, 1856, and on the one hundred and thirty-third ballot, Banks was declared elected, the anti-slavery cause had won a fair fight, and was ever afterwards a power. Well might Giddings then have said: "Now let thy servant go in peace," for the beginning of the end had come. Riddle's description of what follows is too graphic to be passed by. He says: "Then the grand figure of the hero of so many fights, and now the victor, with his full locks of silvery white hair, came forward, as the father of the House, to crown with the oath of office the young speaker. The galleries recognized him, and spontaneous cheers greeted him. Standing just within the inner row of desks in the old hall, with up-

raised hand and swelling voice, having the thrill of emotion in it, he administered the oath in the form of the Puritans." And so was consummated the first great organic triumph of freedom in Congress.

Giddings was one of the leading spirits of the Philadelphia convention of 1856. He drew a portion of the platform, and divided with Preston King the christening of the infant Republican party, begotten in the days of his darkest discouragement, and born in the travail of the Le-compton time. Fremont was not, Buchanan was, elected, and the Thirty-fifth Congress opened. It was to be the last of Giddings' legislative career, and while he left his mark upon its record, his course needs not be followed here. Early in 1857, he fell one day, in his place, stricken with heart disease. He did not die, as all thought he would, at once, but rallied, and, in a measure, recovered. He served the session out; his friends in Ohio thought nothing human more certain than his renomination; he neither cared for it, nor made an effort to secure it. He was old in years, weary with service, and shattered in health. No one represented him at the convention, and a quietly but perfectly organized opposition defeated his nomination by one vote. Perhaps it was as well.

He seems to have left Congress when his work

was fully done, as he entered it, to fill a place that was providentially awaiting him.

Has not some one wisely said

“Happy is he who is not born too soon,  
And whom the Gods vouchsafe a timely death”?

Perhaps the change of tone, the change of issues, which came with secession and war, might have left the noble old leader an incumbrance upon the field; surely they could not have failed to bring him much sorrow and heaviness of heart.

From the many expressions of respect, affection, and regret that were received by Mr. Giddings, upon his retirement, the author cannot refrain from quoting two. They speak for themselves:

William H. Seward writes from Auburn, New York, under date of October 1, 1858:

“I shall have some curiosity to see the bold man that is to come into your place at Washington. He will come there under prodigious responsibilities. I sincerely hoped that your time of service, protracted as it has been, might not end before my own. But you have nothing to regret. You have overcome sentiments the most prejudiced and violent, and have established for yourself a name that the friends of humanity will never suffer to perish.”

The following letter deserves quotation entire. It was sent, not after Giddings' final retirement

from Congress, but after the attack which prostrated him in the House. It furnishes a good index of the feelings of his closest friends towards him :

WASHINGTON, January 25, 1857.

MY DEAR FRIEND :

I cannot permit you to leave this place for your home under the existing circumstances, without expressing to you, in this emphatic manner, the very great satisfaction I have enjoyed, in your acquaintance and friendship for so many years, and the admiration and respect I entertain for the patience, courage, fidelity, and ability, with which you have, through your Congressional life, maintained a just but an unpopular cause. There are very painful considerations connected with the necessity, which at this time compels a suspension if not a final termination of your very valuable labors in the House, but they are not all so. There is a pleasant and cheerful aspect which it presents; you or myself do not believe that accidents, strictly speaking, ever occur, but that the minutest incidents in the physical world are parts of that chain of events, by which the natural and the spiritual worlds are connected, and that what men blindly call accidents, are the results of laws fixed and unerring as those by which the universe moves in its course through the illimitable regions of space. In the light of such a faith, the highest

wisdom is to learn the teachings of every event. And what, my dear sir, is the palpable instruction of the severe teaching which you have just had? Is it not manifestly this, that God has just now no more work for you to do in the particular field in which you have so long labored, but that you are to be transferred to another and less exciting, but not less profitable sphere of action? And if there has ever lived, since Paul, a man who, without arrogance, might appropriate to himself the words of the apostle, when he declares, "I have fought a good fight; I have kept the faith," I believe you are the one. I hope and trust that many years and years of physical and mental vigor may be added to your life, but, whether your future years be few or many, whether they be years of feebleness or strength, I have no doubt that you will ever enjoy the affection of many friends, the respect of your opponents, and the prayers and blessings of the unfortunate and oppressed, in whose behalf you have done so much. But, whatever the future may have in store for you, your success in life is no longer a problem. You have succeeded, for

"They never fail who die

"In a good cause; the block may lick their gore;  
Their heads may sodden in the sun; their limbs  
Be strung to city gates and castle walls--  
But still their spirit walks abroad, though years  
Elapse, and others share as dark a doom;

They but augment the deep and sweeping thoughts  
Which overpower all others, and conduct  
The world at last to freedom."

Very sincerely, your friend,

JOHN P. HALE.

Hon. J. R. Giddings.

Only once more does he come prominently before the American people. Then, a delegate to the Chicago convention of 1860, the second of the Republican party, he sought in vain for a place upon the committee on resolutions. This was denied him, for even then the party doubted the advisability of making slavery an issue in the campaign. The resolutions, as reported, had not a word to say against slavery. He moved such a declaration as an amendment; his motion was lost, he withdrew from the convention; George William Curtis re-presented the amendment, and, by his magnificent eloquence, secured its adoption. Then Giddings returned to his seat.

In 1861 Lincoln offered him the consul generalship of Canada, which he accepted. At Montreal, performing diligently and well his consular duties, working upon his "History of the Rebellion; Its Authors and Causes," which was never published, he spent the remainder of his days, passing at last, into the "undiscovered country," on the 27th day of May, 1864.

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The history of Joshua R. Giddings, as a public man, was practically ended when he retired from the House of Representatives. The old proverb that "Every bullet has its billet," may well be applied to men. All men have missions; some fail by reason of inherent weakness, of carelessness, or the overwhelming force of circumstances, to assume their burthens, or to carry them to the end of the road; but he who meets life's work bravely and performs it to the last, may find it done before life's allotted years are quite passed. So it was with Giddings. In the old farm days in Jefferson; as a student, in the face of all difficulties; as a teacher of the primitive frontier school; as a lawyer upon the circuit; as a Representative in the Legislature of his State; as a Congressman for twenty-one years, his life was a unit. He had a certain work to accomplish, and it was vouchsafed that he should carry it to such point that, as he had, with profit to the cause of humanity, relieved the guard of John Quincy Adams, so, in turn, younger men than he might well assume the burthen of his beloved cause. The appointment in Canada, the term of service there, the sudden fall,—but a fulfillment of the dread prophecy of 1857,—the story of all this has been told almost in as many sentences. Little then remains to say. Much of the history of the long and busy life has been omitted for the reason that this work is a



sketch and not a biography. Giddings for years was in fact the editor of the *Ashtabula Sentinel*, defining its policy, making it his mouth-piece for the utterance of many a truth, that the power of wrong would not permit to be told in Congress; giving it an influence in the cause of liberty beyond that of any similar paper in the land. His work found its way into the columns of many other journals, both of his own and opposite inclining. Upon the stump and the rostrum he spoke often, not only in his own district, but throughout the North and East,—spoke, too, always fearlessly and well, earned reputation, and exerted influence in the most intellectual circles of the United States, and everywhere, in season and out of season, struck stalwart blows in the cause which he had made so peculiarly his own. All these incidents of his laborious life must be dismissed with a word.

Then, too, with all that has been told, this unpretentious sketch has given few glimpses of Giddings as a man—socially and in domestic life—so far has his work overshadowed his personality. He was a man of rare kindness, broad sympathy, benevolence and simple modesty. Every line of his private journals and correspondence proves his deep feeling, his love for home, his devotion to friends and family.

It is not difficult for one who has seen all these,



to persuade himself that, had he not found work to do in Washington—had the issues of the day been of less vital importance, he would have chosen the quiet of home life, and the gain which waited on his professional skill, in preference to the empty honor of membership in a routine Congress. His letters to his wife, so mixed with private matters, and so open in their confidence, as to forbid quotation, tell again and again of loneliness, heart sickness, and the home-longing, which follows a good man from the threshold of his door until his steps again cross the magic line. There are, too, letters to his young daughters and granddaughters—children too young to “read writing,”—laboriously printed in Roman text. He remembered, as did Sydney Smith, when abroad, not only the members of his family, and their individual interests, but the very animals upon the place, and the smallest incidents of the quiet life at Jefferson.

Then, too, while eager to carry home the news of a success, to share it with those whom he loved, he was as anxious to shield them from fear or mortification. When he had left the House, on the 6th of February, 1845, after Black, of Georgia, and Dawson, of Louisiana, had menaced him with death, he at once wrote his son a full account of the affair, deprecating the idea that it was serious, and concluded with these words: “Now, I suppose there will be all sorts of stories, as usual, and

perhaps your mother may be alarmed, but you can assure her that I view the matter coolly, and that there is, in fact, no danger whatever. Do not let her know anything of it, unless it reaches her by the papers." This is but one of many such indications of thoughtfulness and affection.

The author's work has been but clumsily done if many words are needed to guide the reader to a true knowledge of the character of Giddings. His contemporaries made estimates of him as various as were the conflicting interests of the day. Some called him a demagogue; some a fanatic. Some conceded his honesty but denied his sense; others admitted his shrewdness but would allow him no principle. What was he in fact? Not a demagogue, for he chose for years the thorns and hunger of the wayside rather than the easy bed and sumptuous fare that sacrifice of what he believed to be truth would have earned him; not a fanatic, for, whatever others advocated or attempted, he worked strictly within the boundaries of right and of constitutional authority. When his heart was breaking with the pity and indignation that slavery excited in every just and generous man, he sorrowfully admitted that only Providence could open a way to abolition; that, under the Constitution which he daily invoked, the Federal Government had nothing to do with slavery in any State. His life work was defined by the determi-

nation that, so far as it lay in him to prevent it, slavery should not be perpetuated by the introduction of new slaves, or by the pollution of new territory, and that the Federal Government should not be made to stand sponsor to its wrongs. He no more hesitated in 1844 in offending the Liberty party by refusing to support Birney, than he did four years later in supporting Van Buren against Taylor, and thus drawing down upon himself the anathemas of the Whigs. If he was a fanatic, then such is every man who prefers the right, to the winning of wealth, ease, place, and praise, at the sacrifice of principle; if he was a demagogue, then so was St. Paul when, at the command of the Lord, he turned in the dusty highway and obeyed the heavenly voice, casting aside all the advantage of station and the favor of power, to go forth and preach the truth to men.

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